

ADRIAN ROGERS

# LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



## 1 JOHN

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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# Reality

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 24, 1984**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 1:1–4**

*“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.”*

1 JOHN 1:1

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to 1 John chapter 1 tonight. And, for our communion meditation, I want us to think on this subject: “Reality”—“Reality.” I think that the problem with the religion of many people is that it’s just simply not real. Rather than praying with Christ, they pray at Christ. Rather than knowing Jesus, they know about Jesus. And, they do not have reality. And, I’m not talking even about people who are lost; I’m talking about some people who are saved. It seems that they don’t have that bright, shining, vibrant reality that they ought to have. First John chapter 1, verses 1 through 4: *“In the beginning was the Word”* (John 1:1). Excuse me, I’m in the Gospel of John. Let me just get here in the right pew for just a moment. First John chapter 1: *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we*

*have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:1–4).*

Now, you can easily see how I started with the Gospel of John rather than John’s epistles—because John literally wrote five books in the Bible. He wrote the Gospel of John; he wrote 1, 2 and 3 John; and he wrote the Book of the Revelation. Now, in the Gospel of John, he wrote the Gospel of John to the unsaved, and the purpose of the Gospel of John was to convince sinners. He says, “These things have I written unto you that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God and that believing you might have life through His name” (1 John 5:13). And so, that dealt with what God has done, and his purpose was to convince sinners.

Now, the epistles of John that I just read from tonight deal not with the past, but with the present. They deal not with what God has done, but what God is doing. And, while the gospel was written to convince sinners, the epistles were written to confirm the saints, that we might know certain things, and that we might be confirmed in our salvation and in our experience with the Lord Jesus. He then wrote the Book of the Revelation.

Now, the gospels deal with the past; the epistles deal with the present, and in the Revelation, God deals with the future. If the Gospel were to convince sinners, if the epistles were to confirm saints, then the Book of the Revelation is to comfort sufferers, because he was dealing with those people who were suffering. And, he was saying to them, “I’m going to show you how it’s going to end, and I’m going to give you courage and I’m going to give you strength through the Word of God to help you to bear up.” The gospels deal with salvation; the epistles deal with sanctification, and the Revelation deals with glorification.

Now, we’re going to leave out the gospels, and we’re going to leave out the Revelation. And, we’ll look tonight at the Epistle of John—now, not all the epistles of John, but just 1 John. Now, in 1 John, John has four purposes. Let’s just squeeze it in a little more. We’re going to leave these other things present—and he has four purposes when he writes this book of 1 John.

## **I. Have the Proper Attitude**

Now, the first purpose he has is that we, as saints, might have the right attitude. And, the right attitude is an attitude of joy. We spoke about that this morning. We don’t have to guess that this was his purpose. Look in verse 4: *“And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:4).* Now, if you’ll study what John said in 1 John, you’re going to have fullness of joy. That’s the purpose—one of His purposes—that you might have the right attitude. God wants His people filled with joy. Do you

know, a miserable Christian is a contradiction in terms. And yet, there are a lot of people who have a religion that makes them miserable. I mentioned it this morning—to have just enough religion to make you miserable. *It's kind of like a headache. The headache gives you a terrible problem, and you can't stand it. But, you can't afford to get rid of your head. And, that's the way people are with their religion. I mean, it's sort of a pain to them. But, they know they need it, and they can't get rid of it.*

Well, John says, “Away with a religion that wears grave clothes.” And, John says that we ought to have joy. I want to remind you what I said to you this morning: if you do not have unspeakable joy and full of glory in your heart right now, there is something wrong with your spiritual life. *“These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full”* (1 John 1:4). Now, so, the first purpose of 1 John is that the saints might have the proper attitude.

## **II. Have the Proper Activity**

But, not only does he want you to have the proper attitude—he also wants you to have the proper actions. So, not only does he want you to have a joyful life—he wants you to have a pure life. Look, if you will, in chapter 2, verse 1: *“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”* (1 John 2:1). Now, he's confirming the saints—first of all, that they might have the right attitude (which is joy), and then, that they might have the right action (which is holiness). He is writing to prevent sin, and if you were to understand what John says in this little Epistle of 1 John, you would live a holy life. *“These things write I unto you, that [you] sin not”* (1 John 2:1). He is writing to promote holiness.

Now, we're not talking about sinless perfection here. But, I would tell God that Baptists are as afraid of sin as they are sinless perfection. You can say “amen.” Now, *it is not that we are sinless; but friend, we can sin less*—and we need to sin less. And, every day we ought to be more and more like the Lord Jesus, and we ought to be growing in holiness.

## **III. Have the Proper Authority**

But, not only did he write that we might have the proper attitude (which is joy) and the proper action (which is holiness), but he also wrote that we might have the proper authority (which is the Word of God and the truth). Look in 1 John chapter 2 and verse 26: *“These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you”* (1 John 2:26). Now, he's writing, also, that they might have the proper authority and the proper accuracy. You see, there were false teachers in that day, as there are in this day. Now, how are you going to deal with false teachers? Friend, the way to deal with a false

teacher is just simply to know the truth. You don't have to go around studying every cult. And, as Dr. Lee used to say, "Every 'ism' that ought to be and wasn't that comes down the pipe." You don't have to understand all of that, friend.

There's just simply what we call the "plumb bob method." Now, a carpenter, if he wants to see if something is perpendicular, he has a plumb bob. And, it's just a thing that looks like a boy's top that hangs from a string—and gravity sees that it hangs straight up and down—and he just measures everything. If anything's out of whack, if anything's leaning to the right or leaning to the left, all he has to do is just hold up the plumb bob and he can tell whether it's leaning. Isn't that right, carpenters? Don't make me look like a fool; nod your head now. All right. Now, that's right. You say, "What does that preacher know about carpentry?" All right. But, that's true—a plumb bob. I've seen a carpenter. I used to be a carpenter's helper. See them—they just measure whether something is straight up and down with a plumb bob. Now, God has given us the plumb bob, which is the Word of God. And friend, it doesn't matter who knocks on your door or what kind of fellow comes out of left field or off the wall with some sort of a new idea. John says, "I've written about these things which seduce you" (1 John 2:26).

So, he wanted them to have the proper attitude, which was joy. He wanted them to have the proper activity, which was holiness. He wanted them to have the proper authority, which is the Word of God, by which we can measure all of these other things.

#### **IV. Have the Proper Assurance**

And then, he wanted them to have the proper assurance. Look, if you will, in 1 John chapter 5—and he's going to tell us the fourth reason that he wrote this book. First John chapter 5 and verse 13—and remember each of these: he says, "*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life*" (1 John 5:13). He wants you to have the proper assurance. He wants you to know that you're saved; and friend, if you don't know that you're saved, maybe it's because you need to be saved. And, if you are saved and don't know that you're saved, it's because you're living beneath your privileges. You ought to be able to say, "Praise God! I know that I'm saved." A New Testament Christian is not supposed to be a question mark, going around with his head all hung over; he's supposed to be an exclamation point. He's supposed to say, "I know that I'm saved."

I was in a hospital one time—led a woman to Jesus Christ who we believed was on her deathbed. And, I prayed with her, and she asked Christ into her heart and asked Christ to save her. And then, I turned to one of her children, a grown man who was in that room. I said, "Isn't that wonderful that your mother has been saved?" He said, "Nobody can know she's saved. Nobody can know he's saved in this life." He was a member of a particular church. We have a lot of them around here, but I'm not going to

call the name. And, he said, “Nobody can know that they’re saved.” He said, “The best you can do is you can just simply hope that you’re saved.” I said, “Friend, have you ever heard 1 John chapter 5, verse 13? *‘These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that [you] may know that [you] have eternal life’*” (1 John 5:13). Friend, if you can have it and not know it, you can lose it and not miss it. Amen. But, I want to tell you something, friend: if you have it, you ought to know it. And, if you do have it, you can never lose it.

And so, John wrote the gospels to convince sinners; he wrote the epistles to confirm saints. He wrote the revelation to comfort sufferers; and then, he takes this epistle, when he’s confirming the saints, and he writes this epistle—number one, that they might have, dear friend, with all of their heart, the proper attitude (which is joy unspeakable); the proper action (which is holiness); the proper authority (which is the Word of God); and the proper assurance, that they might know that they are children of God. And then, in order to give this assurance, John squeezes it in a little tighter, and it begins to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ, because Christ is the sum, the source, the substance of our assurance. It is in Christ, or we have no right to have assurance. Remember, he said in 1 John chapter 5, verse 13: *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that [you] may know that [you] have eternal life”* (1 John 5:13).

Now, let’s go back and look at the few verses that we read here in 1 John chapter 1 that deal with this assurance, and I want to mention four things about the Lord Jesus Christ that causes us to have assurance. We’re not going to be talking here about attitudes, or actions, or authority, but just simply assurance. We’re going to squeeze it in a little tighter, and we’re going to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ now. And, He’s the One who gives us that assurance. And, four reasons that we can have that assurance in the Lord Jesus Christ:

#### **A. Jesus Is the Always Christ**

Now, the very first thing I want to say about the Lord Jesus is this—that Jesus is always Christ. Look, if you will, in verse 1: *“That which was from the beginning”* (1 John 1:1). Now, He is the eternal Christ—the always Christ; there never was a time when He was not. You say, “Oh, He started at the beginning.” No, He was there in the beginning. You read John 1, verse 1: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”* (John 1:1). And, since He was there in the beginning, of course, He’s been there since the beginning and from the beginning. He is the always Christ.

John tells us that Jesus is the pre-existent, co-eternal, co-equal with God the Father. I want you to understand this, dear friend: the Jehovah’s Witnesses do not believe this; the Mormons do not believe this; many false cults do not believe this—but a born-again



Bible Christian, who knows his Bible, knows that Jesus Christ is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father. He is the always Christ; there never was a time when He was not. And, that little baby that was born in Bethlehem's manger was older than His mother and just as old as His father. Never forget it: Jesus always was—Jesus is—from the beginning.

And, by the way, if these knock on your door, and you find out what they believe about Jesus, and if they don't believe that Jesus is co-eternal with God the Father and co-equal with God the Father, you can know immediately by the "plumb bob method" they're a false cult. You can know immediately. You measure them by Christ. This same John said, "If any come to your door and bring not the doctrine of Christ, don't receive them into your house and neither bid him God's speed" (2 John 1:10).

Now, by the way, let me just show you something interesting, if you want to deal with some of these people. First of all, just take them to Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6. And, just keep your bookmark right there in 1 John, but turn to Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6. And, let's see what it says about the Lord Jesus. Here it says about the Lord Jesus—and I don't think there's any body who would equivocate that this verse deals with Christ: *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor"*—what's the next word?—*"The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"* (Isaiah 9:6). Now, if He is the mighty God—if He is the Son, the mighty God—then He has to be co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father.

Now, when I've asked some of these false cults about this verse, do you know what they say to me? They say, "Oh yes, Jesus is the mighty God, but He's not Jehovah God." That is, He is the mighty God, but He's not the Almighty God. I talked with some Mormon elders in Korea about this, and they said, "Oh, He's the mighty God; He's not the Almighty God." Then, you've got too many gods—you've got too many gods. The Bible says, *"I am the LORD thy God ... Thou shalt have no other gods before me"* (Exodus 20:2–3). And, if Jesus Christ is not God—a very God—He's not worthy to be worshiped, for the Bible says, *"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only"* (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8). Isn't that right?

In the Bible, you find out whether they worship the Lord Jesus. Well, if any body says this to you—that "Jesus is the mighty God but not the Almighty God; only Jehovah is the Almighty God"—then just ask them, "Well, if I could find a verse of scripture that says that 'Jehovah is the mighty God' and this verse says that 'Jesus is the mighty God,' then wouldn't you have to say that Jesus and Jehovah are the same?" They would say, "Oh, yes." Then, you'd turn them to Jeremiah 32 and verse 18. And, let's show you something here in Jeremiah chapter 32 and verse 18: *"Thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest"* (Jeremiah 32:18). Oh, well, let's

begin in verse 17: *“Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee”*—verse 18 is still talking about Jehovah God—*“Thou shewest loving kindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name”* (Jeremiah 32:17–18). They’re exactly the same terminology that is used to describe the Jehovah of hosts—the Lord of hosts. “The mighty God” is the name that is used in Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6 (Isaiah 9:6) to describe Bethlehem’s babe.

Now, what I’m trying to say—go back to 1 John chapter 1—and that is this: the Lord Jesus Christ that we worship and whose broken body and shed blood we are going to commemorate tonight—this Lord Jesus Christ is the always Christ. There never was a time when He was not. He can never change; therefore, He’s the same yesterday, today, and forever. And, how could He change, friend? You know He’s not going to get worse, and He couldn’t get better. Amen. He cannot change; He’s always the same.

## **B. Jesus Is the Actual Christ**

But, not only is He the always Christ; I want to say He’s the actual Christ—the actual Christ—because, you see, when we’re talking about the pre-existence of Christ, that Christ dwelt in the bosom of the Father, in spiritual form—in spirit form—before He was made flesh, some get the idea that perhaps He never was really made flesh, that He never was an actual man. But now, continue to read: *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard”*—now, watch it—*“which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life”* (1 John 1:1).

Now, there was, in this time—in John’s time—a heresy that was already beginning. It was called the “Gnostic heresy” after the Greek word *genose*, which means “to know.” And, there were people who call themselves “Gnostics”—that is, they were people who had superior wisdom. That is, a way of describing them is they were know-it-alls. That’s what they were—they were know-it-alls. They said, “We know.” Now, what the Gnostics said was, “Oh, we believe in Christ, but we do not believe that God ever took an actual human body. We believe that the body that people saw of the Lord Jesus Christ was a kind of a phantom.” That is, they did not believe in the incarnation; they did not believe in the humanity of Jesus.

Now, I want you to think with me, and I want you to think of Christ. And, it’s absolutely, fundamentally important that you understand the deity of Christ. But, I want to tell you—and don’t miss what I am about to say—it is just as big a heresy to deny the humanity of Christ as it is the deity of Christ. And, if you deny the humanity of Christ, you’re going to miss a tremendous blessing and you’re going to have a distortion of

Christianity. It was absolutely, fundamental that Jesus became a man, and He was a man. And, without the full humanity of Jesus Christ you have no incarnation. He was as much God as though He was not man at all and as much man as though He were not God at all. He was not half man and half God. He was not all God and no man and all man and no God. He was the God-man—the God-man. And, never forget it. He was the actual Christ; He was flesh and blood.

Now, notice what John said: “He was more than mere man, but He was man”—now, the eyewitness news. Look again—he says, “That which we have seen with our eyes and that which we have heard” (1 John 1:1). Had you lived back in this day with a tape recorder, you could have taped recorded the voice of the Lord Jesus. Thank God they didn’t have one. We’d make an idol out of that, wouldn’t we? But, you could have tape-recorded the Lord Jesus Christ. *“That which...we have heard, [that] which we have seen...[that] which we have looked upon”* (1 John 1:1). Had you a camera there, you could have made a moving picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. This word “seen” comes from the Greek word *theomi*; it’s the word we get our word “theater” from, and it actually means not a glimpse, but it means “an intense investigation that gives understanding.” John says, “We heard Him. We scrutinized Him. We examined Him. We heard Him. We saw Him.” And then, he says, “That which we have handled” (1 John 1:1)—that is, “we touched Him; we actually put our hands upon Him.” This John was the John who laid his head upon Jesus’s chest. Jesus had a physical, material body. I don’t know how much He weighed, but let’s say He weighed 182 pounds. I don’t know how tall He was, but let’s say He was six-feet-one inches tall. He was something. I don’t know what color His hair was, but let’s say it was dark brown—I don’t know. But, He did have a hair color. He did have an eye color. He did have a weight. He did have a height. He was the actual Christ.

First Timothy chapter 3, verse 16: *“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh”* (1 Timothy 3:16) John 1, verse 14: *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us”* (John 1:14). And, what an encouragement His humanity is to me, because without His humanity He could never be an example to me!

Now, when Jesus was here in the flesh, He felt what I feel. He was *“in all points tempted like as I am”* (Hebrews 4:15). And, when Jesus lived His life here in the flesh, though He a very God from the beginning in the bosom of God, He left all of that in the Glory. He took upon Himself human flesh, and He depended upon the Holy Spirit and the God in Glory to live just exactly as I must depend upon the Holy Spirit and the God in Glory to live. Now, what I’m trying to say is He didn’t pull rank on me, and He never performed a miracle outside His dependence upon God and His dependence upon the Holy Spirit. And, therefore, He is my example. And, if you take away His humanity, you

take away His example. And, by the way, if you take away His humanity, you take away His blood atonement. He is the actual Christ.

### **C. Jesus Is the Articulate Christ**

Now, another thing I want to say about Him—not only was He the always Christ and not only is He the actual Christ, but He is also articulate Christ. Look again: *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled”*—now, watch this—*“of the Word of life”* (1 John 1:1). Jesus is called “the Word” in John 1: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”* (John 1:1). In Revelation chapter 19, when He comes again, He has a name that is engraved upon Him—*“and [that] name is called The Word of God”* (Revelation 19:13). And, here He’s called three times—John calls Him “the Word,” “the Word,” “The Word.”

Now, why does John call Jesus the Word? Because a word is a form of communication. That’s the purpose of a word. We communicate by words, and Jesus is God’s communication to us. Do you want to know God? You have to know God through Christ, or you will not know God. The only way you can know Him is through His Word, and His Word is the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **1. Jesus Is God’s First Word**

By the way, He was God’s first Word: *“In the beginning was the Word”* (John 1:1).

#### **2. Jesus Is God’s Full Word**

By the way, He is God’s full Word: *“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”* (Colossians 2:9).

#### **3. Jesus Is God’s Final Word**

And, He is God’s final Word. God *“hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son”* (Hebrews 1:2). And friend, when you say, “Jesus,” you’ve said it all. I mean, that’s it—that’s it. God doesn’t have any more to say. Do you want me to tell you what God is saying to this world? “Jesus.” Do you want me to tell you what God is saying to you? “Jesus.” Jesus is the articulate Christ; He is the One who articulates the mind and the will of God, and He does it through His written words.

Now, let me tell you something, friend: a man and his word may be different, but God and His Word cannot be different. And, if you believe in the God of the Word, you’re going to have to believe in the Word of that God. You can’t separate these. And, Jesus said that if you’re going to hear Him, you’re going to hear His Word.

### **D. Jesus Is the Available Christ**

Now, the last thing and I’ll be finished—not only is He the always Christ, not only is He the actual Christ, not only is He the articulate Christ, but, thank God, He’s also the

available Christ. You say, “Brother Rogers, we can’t see Him. We can’t touch Him. We can’t hear Him. We cannot handle Him.” But, you can know Him. Look, if you will, in verse 3: *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ”* (1 John 1:3). Thank you, John. I appreciate, John, that you wrote this, because I’m having fellowship with you right now. You say, “You’re having fellowship with John?” That’s right. That’s what the old timers used to mean when they talked about “the communion of the saints.” They didn’t just talk about us having communion here. Did you know I have communion with John? You say, “How could you have communion with John? You’ve never seen him.” He and I are members of the same Body. We have the same Father; the same Holy Spirit that is still in John in the Glory is in me right now. And, I want to tell you, dear friend, if you’ve got a loved one that’s gone on to Glory, if that loved one is with Jesus and you’re with Jesus, they can’t be far from you. Amen.

Listen, we are still having fellowship with the Apostle John and with all of those who know the Lord, because our fellowship is with the Lord Jesus Christ. And, it is available by faith, and John declares Him, that we might receive Him. For, you see, as I said Wednesday night—if you were here Wednesday night—that we who are saved have the ability to see the invisible, to know the unknowable, and to do the impossible. The soul has eyes. And, the soul has ears, and the soul has hands. And so, I can see Him by the eye of faith. I can hear Him by the Word of faith. I can touch Him by the touch of faith.

Now, dear friend, you need to know more than the historical Christ; you need to experience the personal Christ. You’re not saved by the plan of salvation; you’re saved by the man of salvation. *When you got married, you didn’t get the marriage religion; you got a wife or a husband. When you get saved, you don’t get the Christian religion, you get Jesus.* Friend, you have Him, and you know Him and have fellowship with Him. And, He is to be in your heart and in your life a bright living reality.

## Conclusion

Now, we come to the Lord’s Table. And, I want to tell you, when we come to the Lord’s Table tonight, we have not come to mourn a corpse. We have come to have a meal with a friend, and His name is Jesus. Amen. He is here tonight; never forget it. Let’s bow our heads in prayer.

# The Sweetest Fellowship This Side of Heaven

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 27, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 1:1–6**

*“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you,  
that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship  
is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”*

1 JOHN 1:3

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## Introduction

Be finding 1 John—1 John—and that’s right back near the back of the Bible, almost to the Book of the Revelation—1 John, and find the first chapter. And, we’re going to be studying the Book of 1 John—it’s not a very long book, only five chapters—and we’re going to enjoy it. The title of our study: “The Sweetest Fellowship This Side of Heaven,” because the theme of 1 John is fellowship.

You know, John wrote five books of the Bible. He wrote the Gospel of John, and the purpose of the Gospel of John was to convince sinners—that is, to lead us to faith in Christ. And then, he wrote the Book of the Revelation, and the purpose of the Book of the Revelation was to comfort saints, to help us understand the days in which we're living and to give us a hope for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. But then, he wrote these epistles—these wonderful epistles—and they are written to confirm saints. And so, we thank God for this epistle that has for its theme the word *know*—K-N-O-W—and the word *fellowship*, and the word *life*.

Look, if you will now, as we read, and we're going to share together the first four verses. The Apostle John says, *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, [and] which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life"*—underscore the phrase "the Word of life"—*"(For the life was manifested"*—underscore the word *life*—*"and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)"* *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us"*—underscore the word *fellowship*—*"and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ...these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full"* (1 John 1:1–4). Underscore the word *joy*.

Now, what is this fellowship—this wonderful fellowship? Well, it is a fellowship that comes through the life that we have with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, not everybody here in this congregation, and not everybody listening to me by television, has life. You say, "If I don't have life, how could I be listening?" Because you can be existing and not have life. Jesus spoke of an unsaved woman, and the Bible says this: *"she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she [lives]"* (1 Timothy 5:6). The walking dead—dead while they live. That's the reason Jesus said in John chapter 10 and verse 10: *"[I've] come that [you] might have life, and...have it...abundantly"* (John 10:10). Now, He was talking to people whose hearts were already beating, blood flowing through their veins, but Jesus said, "You don't have life; you have an existence." *An oyster has existence, but it certainly doesn't have life, as we consider life today—the life that is full and free in the Lord Jesus Christ.*

I was in Moscow shortly after communism imploded and was invited to go into the mayor's office. That was a great honor and a great responsibility, and I took some Christian literature with me and sat around that big table in the mayor's office in Russia. And, I wondered what I would say to those people, because they were turning from communism, hopefully to capitalism. And, I told those leaders there—I said, "Gentlemen, I want you to know something: while I believe that capitalism is far superior to communism, I want you to understand this: they are both only two forms of materialism—only two forms of materialism—and if that's all you have (just a better form



of materialism), you've still missed it. And, I was able to explain to them that man is a spirit, that we—being spiritual life, not just existence—we need life through the Spirit in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that's what I want to say to you today. Friend, it's not just simply existence; it's life. And, what the Apostle John here is speaking about is the Word of life. If you take the word *live* and spell it backward, it spells *evil*. And, there are so many people who are just living backward, and their life, rather than glorious, is, really, evil, because they do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.

Now, in order to experience this life and enjoy this life, this life that is full and free, the Apostle John tells us three things in these few verses that we've looked at.

## **I. A Fact Established**

Now, first of all, he tells us that there is a fact that is established. Write it down: a fact established. Look, if you will, here in verse 1—look at it: *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, [and] which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life”* (1 John 1:1). Now, the devil always wants to muddy things; the devil always wants to distort and deny things. And, of course, the greatest truth is the truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, the devil, since the Lord Jesus Christ was here on earth—and even before He came—has been trying to confuse people as to who the Lord Jesus is, was, and always will be.

Now, in this day, in John's day, there was a cult, a false cult. We don't have it today, at least by the name it had back then. They were called the “Gnostics.” You would spell that G-N-O-S-T-I-C-S—the Gnostics—and it comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, which means “to know.” And, these were people who felt that they had superior knowledge. Maybe we can just give them the name “the know-it-alls”; they were “the know-it-alls.” And, they were too sophisticated—they were too intellectual—to believe that God could've come to earth in human flesh, because they really believe everything material is evil, that any thing that was physical or material was evil. That's what the Gnostics believed, and so they believed that Jesus Christ could not have had—the true Messiah could not have had—a material, physical body. They believed that the Jesus that was here on earth was sort of a ghost, sort of a phantom, but not real. Now, what John is doing right now—he's just going to knock Gnosticism right in the head. He's going to show that Jesus Christ literally, physically, bodily walked here on this earth, and he says, “I am an eyewitness of that.”

Now, let me say there were false cults in John's day; there are false cults in our day, and almost every false cult is wrong primarily about Jesus Christ—did you know that? You can check them about Jesus. Friend, *if they're wrong about Jesus, it doesn't*



*matter what they're right about.* I was in a house and with some friends, and two young boys who call themselves “elders” knocked on the door, and they want to talk about Joseph Smith, whether Joseph Smith was a prophet. And, I said, “Well, boys, before we talk about Joe, let’s talk about Jesus, because,” I said, “if you’re wrong about Jesus, it doesn’t matter what you think about Joe.” Isn’t that right? You see, they did not believe that Jesus is God in human flesh. They do not believe that Jesus is co-equal and co-eternal with Almighty God. Every false cult is off on the person of Jesus—almost every false cult, anyway. And so, here John is dealing with a false cult.

You know, the Bible says, “If any come to your house and bring not the doctrine of Christ, don’t receive him into your house, neither bid him God speed” (2 John 1:10). And so, and let me give you another verse—2 John chapter 1 and verse 9: “*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God*” (2 John 1:9). Now, it’s just as plain as it can be: if a person is wrong about Jesus, he doesn’t know God, because Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: [and] no [one comes] unto the Father, but by me*” (John 14:6).

So, John starts out to establish who Jesus is. And, remember now, we’re talking about that this life is a fact—a fact, a F-A-C-T—a fact established.

#### A. **Jesus Is an Eternal Fact**

And, he’s saying here that Jesus is—now, write it down—Jesus is an eternal fact—Jesus is an eternal fact. Look, if you will: “*That which was from the beginning*” (1 John 1:1). He is the Christ of the eternities, and John had already written in his gospel, in John 1:1: “*In the beginning was the Word*”—“*In the beginning was the Word.*” Before anything began to begin, Jesus was there. And, that is God’s name for Jesus—“the Word.” “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*” (John 1:1). Jesus is called “The Word of God” in Revelation chapter 19, verse 13: it speaks of Jesus coming in glory, and it says, “*And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God*” (Revelation 19:13).

Now, that’s interesting, isn’t it? Jesus is called “the Word” here. We see here in verse 1, He’s called “*the Word of life*” (1 John 1:1). John 1:1: He’s called “the Word of God.” Well, what is a word? A word is the expression of an invisible thought or an idea. Jesus is the visible expression of the invisible God. Jesus articulates God.

##### **1. Jesus Is God’s First Word**

He is God’s first word. He was there in the beginning: “*In the beginning was the Word*” (John 1:1).

##### **2. Jesus Is God’s Full Word**

He is God’s full word. He says over in the Book of Revelation that He’s the Alpha and the Omega (Revelation 1:8; Revelation 1:11; Revelation 21:6; Revelation 22:13)—the

Word of God, the Alpha and the Omega. You know what that means? The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet—alpha and omega. If He were speaking to us today, He'd say He was "the A and the Z." I have hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of books in my library—all of them are made up of just 26 letters. Every thought in my library's just 26 letters. And, what Jesus is saying is, "I'm God's alphabet. Any thing that God's going to say, He's going to say through Me and by Me."

### **3. Jesus Is God's Final Word**

Jesus is God's first word; He's God's full word, and He's God's final word. The Book of Hebrews says, "[God] hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Hebrews 1:2). Now friend, when you've said, "Jesus," you've said it all—you can't say any more, and you don't need to say any more. All of the revelation of God is wrapped up in the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is a fact. He is an eternal fact. He's the Word that existed before anything else was created. He is the expression—the visible, physical expression—of the invisible spiritual God.

#### **B. Jesus Is a Physical Fact**

But, not only is Jesus Christ an eternal fact, but write this down: Jesus is a physical fact. It's very important that you understand this. Now, notice what John is saying: "*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life*" (1 John 1:1).

#### **1. There Was Audible Evidence**

Now, John says, "He wasn't a phantom; He wasn't a ghost. We have the audible evidence. We heard Him." Had they had tape players back in that day, you could've taped the voice of the Lord Jesus.

#### **2. There Was Visible Evidence**

And then, not only was there audible evidence; there was physical evidence. John says, "We saw Him"—"*[and that] which we have looked upon*" (1 John 1:1). And, John uses the word *theaomai*; it's the word we get our word *theater* from. It means "to look carefully." John says, "Look, I was with Him for three years. I watched Him; I saw Him."

#### **3. There Was Physical Evidence**

And, not only was there the audible evidence, not only was there the visible evidence; there was the physical evidence. He said, "We handled Him; we touched Him" (1 John 1:1). Let me tell you what Jesus Christ was like: Jesus Christ weighed 180 pounds. He had chestnut hair. He was six-feet-tall or something like that. I mean, I don't know what He was, but there were the actual, physical dimensions. I'm saying that Jesus Christ was in human form. He was born of a virgin. He was as much a man as if He were not

God at all. Now, let me tell you this: it's as much a heresy to deny the humanity of Jesus as it is to deny the deity of Jesus—you have to understand that. He was God, very God. He wasn't half God and half man. He wasn't all God and no man. He wasn't all man and no God. He was the God-man—never another like the Lord Jesus Christ. But, remember the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, if you deny the humanity of Jesus, you're denying Christianity. That's what John is saying: "Look, we saw Him. We heard Him. We touched Him, the Word of life" (1 John 1:1). He is an eternal fact, but He is a physical fact.

**a. He Is My Redeemer Because He's a Man**

Thank God for His humanity. You see, apart from His humanity, I couldn't be saved. He became a man to die on the cross, and apart from the shedding of blood, there's no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22).

**b. He Is My Example Because He's a Man**

Apart from His humanity, I have no example. I can't follow as an example the God in the Glory, because I'm a human; He's not a human. But, I can walk as Jesus walked, and I want to tell you something, friend: when Jesus Christ was upon this earth, He did not pull rank on me. Every miracle He did, He did not as God would do a miracle; He did the miracle as man filled with the Holy Spirit would do the miracle. All of the life that He lived, He lived as a man, and He depended upon the same power that Adrian can depend upon day by day and moment by moment.

**c. He Is My Comforter and Friend Because He's a Man**

So, He is my Redeemer because He's a man. He's my example because He's a man. And, I want to tell you, He's my comforter and friend because He's a man. I don't have a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of my infirmities. He was tempted in all points like as I am (Hebrews 4:15). And, thank God, He knows, and He cares, and He understands.

So, what is John talking about when he's talking about this life? He's talking about an established fact.

**C. Jesus Is a Spiritual Fact**

But, I want to tell you something else: not only is He an eternal fact, and not only is He a physical fact, but I want to say something else about Him: He is a spiritual fact. "Now, what do you mean by that?" Well, look and see what John is saying: "*That which was from the beginning*"—the eternal fact—"which we have heard, [and] which we have seen with our eyes, which [we've] looked upon [with our hands]...our hands have handled, of the Word of life"—a physical fact—"(*For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life*)" (1 John 1:1–2).

"Now, wait a minute—these other people haven't seen..." No, that's right. John says,

“I am going to tell you what I have seen so that you can believe.” I have never seen Jesus. I’ve never heard Jesus. I’ve never touched Jesus—not with my hands. But, I believe in Him because Jesus Christ is also a spiritual fact. He is not here now in a physical body, but the Holy Spirit of God reveals Him. And, as John heard Him, faith now becomes the ear of the soul. As John has seen Him, faith now becomes the eye of the soul. As John had felt Him, faith now becomes the hands of the soul. We can know Him through the Spirit.

Let me give you a verse. John says over here in 1 John chapter 5, in the beginning, in verse 9: *“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which [ye have] testified of his Son”* (1 John 5:9). You see, God sends the Holy Spirit now to testify to the words of the apostles, and we have the words of the apostles.

There was a college professor who was an atheist, and he loved to ridicule his students. And so, he asked his students, “Have any of you ever heard God?” Nobody answered. “Any of you ever seen God?” Nobody answered. “Have any of you ever touched God?” Nobody answered. He said, “So, there is no God.” And, the class sat there. All of them cowed and so forth, until one student lifted his hand and said, “Professor, may I ask a question to the class?” He said, “All right.” He said, “Have any of you heard the professor’s brain?” Nobody answered. “Have any of you touched the professor’s brain?” Nobody answered. “Have any of you seen the professor’s brain?” Nobody answered. He said, “Then, we can conclude the professor has no brain, according to his logic.”

No, you see, John said, “That which we’ve seen, and that which we’ve heard, we declare unto you” (1 John 1:3). And then, the Bible says, *“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater”* (1 John 5:9). And today, I am not dependent upon oratory, or illustration, or logic to convince you. Thank God the Holy Spirit of God is here to say what He’s saying is true. That is the witness of God. Jesus is an eternal fact. Jesus is a physical fact. Jesus is a spiritual fact. And, the Holy Spirit of God testifies unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **II. A Fellowship Experienced**

So, what is this life? The first point: It is a fact established. Second point: It is a fellowship experienced—not only a fact, but a fellowship. Now look, if you will, in verse 2: *“(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) [And] that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye...may have fellowship with us”* (1 John 1:2–3). Now, John wants to share it. John says, “I saw it, and now I want to share it.” And, any body who sees it, hears it, knows it, wants to share it, amen? That’s

the reason why we're called "witnesses" and not "lawyers." A lawyer argues a case; a witness tells what he's seen and heard. And, the only person who can't witness is the person who hasn't seen or heard anything.

Now, he says, "I do this that you might have fellowship" (1 John 1:3). What is fellowship? Fellowship is not coffee and donuts. Fellowship is not, as some people cutely say, "two fellows in the same ship." What is fellowship? This is a very technical word: *"that [you] may have fellowship with us"* (1 John 1:3). It is the Greek word *koinonia*. Now, get that word in your heart and in your mind. That needs to be in your vocabulary. It is the Greek word *koinonia*, and it means "to hold things in common"—that is, this Jesus, this established fact, because of this established fact that is established, there is a fellowship that is experienced—that we can have fellowship one with another. It literally means "to have something in common." Now, notice who we have fellowship with.

#### A. Fellowship with God

Notice he says in verse 3: *"our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ"* (1 John 1:3). Well, that brings up a real question: What do I have in common with the Father? Nothing—nothing. He's holy; I'm unholy. He is Almighty; I am a worm. And, how can Adrian have fellowship with God? But yet, the Apostle John says, *"Our fellowship is with the Father"* (1 John 1:3). I have nothing in common with the Father. Notice in verses 5 and 6: *"This then is the message which we have heard [from] him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth"* (1 John 1:5–6). We're in the dark; He's in the light. I mean, there's a great chasm between us and Almighty God, so how can I have fellowship with Almighty God?

Here's how: this God, who knows that there's a chasm between Adrian and Himself, and between you and Himself, sent the Lord Jesus Christ to take something that is common between us, human flesh. Jesus becomes a man. And now, He never discards His deity, but now He takes humanity. And now, we begin to have likeness; we become together. He takes on the nature of man that I might take on the nature of God. And, he says in 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 4—you're going to love this: *"[we have now become] partakers of the divine nature"—"[now] partakers of the divine nature"* (2 Peter 1:4). And, the word *partaker* there is exactly the same word that is translated *fellowship* over here in 1 John. We have the fellowship of the divine nature.

You see, Jesus took humanity, and, therefore, He became like I am that I might become like He is, that we might have that—He took the very nature of man—that we might take the nature of God. And so, I have fellowship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, a worm like I am can walk and talk and can fellowship with Him

and can sing:

*I come to the garden alone  
[When] the dew is still on the roses  
And the voice I hear falling on my ear  
The Son of God discloses.*

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,  
And He tells me I am His own (C. Austin Miles).*

That's the fellowship, the *koinonia*, that we have with Him because of the Incarnation. And, that's the reason old John is saying, "Look, He's a man—He's a man. We saw Him. We touched Him. We heard Him." He took the nature of man that we might take the nature of God, and we have become "*partakers of the divine nature*" (2 Peter 1:4).

### **B. Fellowship with One Another**

And then, you see, look: not only, then, do we have fellowship with God, but it follows as night follows day that we must have fellowship with one another, because when I am born of God and you are born of God, the same nature that's in Adrian is in you, and the Jesus in me is going to love the Jesus in you. We have the same nature; we're born from the same womb, from the womb of grace—and that's so important. That's the reason why the Bible calls that, in Philippians 1:5, the "*[koinonia of] the gospel*," or the "*fellowship [of] the gospel*." That's the reason, in Philippians 2, verse 1, it's called the "*[koinonia]*"—or, "the fellowship"—"*of the Spirit*" (Philippians 2:1).

And, by the way, let me say a word. How many of you are unmarried? Let me see your hand. Hold them up; let me look. All right now, look around, folks. All right, I mean, if you're looking for somebody, maybe we ought to do that again. All right, you're unmarried. Now, let me tell you something—let me tell you something: don't you ever marry an unsaved person. Don't do it—don't do it—for the Bible says you're not to be "*unequally yoked together with unbelievers*"—and then, he asked this question—"*for what fellowship*"—what *koinonia*—"hath...light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14). Don't you realize you're twice-born when you're a child of God? And, if they're not twice-born, they're a child of Satan. You talk about in-law problems—you've got the devil for a father-in-law. I mean, you think about it: there's no fellowship; there's no common life. I thank God for the fellowship I have with my wife—and not just the love, but the fellowship that I have with her, the things that we share in common.

You see, listen, you marry an unsaved person, and you want to go to church on Sunday—they want to sleep in on Sunday. It's hard enough to get to church when both of you are saved, amen? The Christian wants to give; the pagan says, "I don't want to give." The Christian wants to make Sunday a holy day; the pagan wants to make it a



holiday. The Christian wants to pray when a crisis comes; the pagan ridicules prayer. The Christian wants the children to be taught of the things of God; the pagan doesn't care. And, before long, friend, you're going to be acting like the pagan rather than the pagan acting like you. You're going to have a division in your home, and that's, so many times, the reason that divorce comes: there's no real *koinonia*—there's no real fellowship. You're three times more likely to get divorced. The Bible says, "*A threefold cord is not [easily] broken*" (Ecclesiastes 4:12). What are you going to do about the children when you marry an unsaved person and that unsaved person doesn't share the things of God with your children? You can't. The children are confused and mixed up. No, you just marry only a saved person.

And, let me say something else: don't ever marry a person to reform them—I mean, if they're not walking with God before. And, I'll tell you something else: don't even date a person that you would not marry if you fell in love with them. Just don't do it—just don't do it. I'm telling you, folks, that—listen—our fellowship is with the Father and with one another. When I have the nature of God in me and I am born of the Spirit, and when I am a partaker of the divine nature—I have this fellowship with God—then I'm to seek out for a partner for life, somebody else who has that same *koinonia*, that same fellowship, with the Father and, therefore, with me.

So, you know what holds Bellevue Baptist Church together? I look around—look at all these people. We're different, aren't we?

Bobby, would you do me a favor? I want you to go out there and you get two people—bring them up here. I'm going to get three people. Let me get somebody out of the choir. Let me see...you come here. Let me get somebody else here. I want you to come up here. All right, let's see. You come up here. Come on up here on the platform here. All right, come on. Stand right here in a row. Completely unrehearsed. All right, get over here so we can all see you. All right, does everybody know everybody else here? Give them each a card, will you, Bobby? Don't turn it over; hold it just like that.

All right, let me get a microphone here. All right, who are you? And, what's your name? And, what do you do? "I'm Susan Glover, and I teach seventh-grade girls." Are you scared? "No." Okay, good. Who are you, and what do you do? "I'm Michael Lipshee, and I go to seventh grade." Seventh grade? "Uh-huh." What's your favorite sport? "Basketball." Good. Who are you, and what do you do? "I'm Sheila Mitchell. I am director of pharmacy at a hospital." That's good. Who are you, and what do you do? "Ray Leman, and I do construction." Who are you, and what do you do? "Jim Price—retired." Retired, yeah.

All right now, here they are. Most of these folks don't know—really know—each other. But, look around; look at each other—just kind of look at each other. All right now—all right—I want to show you what these folks have in common. Would you turn



these cards around? That's what they have in common, amen? Thank you very much. Y'all be seated. Listen, see, that's what makes this church the church that it is: it's Jesus. Take this, Bobby, if you will. You see, folks, that is *koinonia*. The Jesus in me is going to love the Jesus in you, and when we love Jesus, we're going to love one another.

### III. A Fullness Enjoyed

And so, listen—listen—this fellowship—it's a fact established. It is a fellowship experienced. And now, here's the third thing very quickly: it is a fullness enjoyed. Look, if you will, in verse 4: *"And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full"* (1 John 1:4). There is no joy like the joy of knowing one another in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that's the reason we call this book "the sweetest fellowship this side of Heaven." Now, I don't know about all of you—I don't know about all those folks up there—but I know one thing about every mother's child in this building: you want joy—I mean, you want joy. And, this is where joy is found. John says, "This is why I wrote this book—that you might have joy" (1 John 1:4).

A woman lost her house keys; she couldn't find them. She looked all over the house, and she couldn't find them. She looked in her purse, and there they were. You know why she didn't find them before she looked in her purse? She was looking in the wrong place because her keys were in her purse. Now, you can look all over for joy, but you're not going to find joy until you find it in the Lord Jesus Christ. Joy is the byproduct of fellowship with God and fellowship with the family.

Psalm 16, verse 11: *"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand is pleasure for evermore"* (Psalm 16:11). You know, sin promises joy, but it never delivers it. You, many of you, have maybe 100 television channels coming into your house right now. We have more entertainment, more amusements, more restaurants, yet more loneliness, and more depression, and more alcoholism, and more drugs, and more divorce, and more suicide, than ever. Why? Because, friend, there's only true joy in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I'm not saying that you can't be a lost person and be happy for a while. We're not talking about happiness; we're talking about joy. Happiness depends upon what happens; joy depends upon the Lord. The Bible says, *"Rejoice in the LORD"* (Psalm 33:1; Psalm 97:12; Isaiah 41:16; Isaiah 61:10; Joel 2:23; Habakkuk 3:18; Zechariah 10:7; Philippians 3:1; Philippians 4:4). If you live for happiness, you're a prisoner of circumstances, because if the circumstances change, then you're not happy anymore. But, Jesus never changes. Happiness is a cosmetic; it's on the outside. Joy is character; it is on the inside. Happiness only meets your surface needs, but joy meets your deepest needs. *Therefore, happiness is like a thermometer—it just registers*

conditions. Joy is the thermostat that controls the conditions. Happiness evaporates in a crisis. Joy, many times, intensifies in a crisis. Happiness is wonderful. We're talking about miles of smiles, but let me tell you something, friend: happiness is at its fullest when it is mingled with joy, when you know the joy of the Lord.

## Conclusion

And so, what John is saying is, "Look, let me tell you about this life: this life—it comes from God. It is real. It is a fact. It is established, and it results in a fellowship experience. There's a *koinonia*; we have fellowship with God and fellowship with one another. And then, there's a fullness in joy. We have '*joy unspeakable and full of glory*' (1 Peter 1:8)."

Now, let me say this: Jesus, friend, is the Word of God—He is the Word of God. And, He's speaking here today; He's communicating. He's the Word of God. Let's just say that He's broadcasting today on station W-O-R-D. He's broadcasting, and He's broadcasting because He loves you. Now, would you say, in the physical realm, that there's no music in the air just because your radio's turned off? You see, just because you've turned off the radio, wouldn't you be a fool to deny the music? I mean, would you say it's not there just because the radio's not on? No. Let me ask you a question: Do you have your radio on today? Do you have your antenna up? Jesus is here—He is here. Don't say He's not here; He is here—He's here. Got a lot of folks tuned in to this station W-O-R-D.

He is the Word of life. It's life that you need, and John said, "I wrote these things that you might have fullness of joy" (1 John 1:4). I'm going to tell you something: I believed what I believe when I started preaching it, but I believe it so much more now. I was saved as a teen, and He kept me for all these years. But, I can honestly and sincerely say this—and I know that God is listening: He means more to me today—far more—than when I first met Him. I'm not finding hidden flaws. To know God, to know our brothers and sisters in Christ, friend, that is fullness of joy—that is fullness of joy.

Would you bow your heads? While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, you need to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Again, don't deny the music because your radio's turned off. Would you just open up now to the Word of God? Would you pray a prayer like this: "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"? Now, listen carefully. Tell Him this: "I do trust You, Jesus"—friend, tell Him that right now. Boys and girls, tell Him that. Husbands, wives, young men, young ladies—"I trust You, Jesus; I trust You now. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me"—pray it and mean it; pray it and mean it—"Save me, Jesus." Did you ask Him? Then, tell Him, "Lord Jesus, I thank You for saving me. I yield my life to You. I turn from all sin. I will follow You wherever You lead me if You will only help

me. I'm weak, but You're strong. 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, Lord, to make it public. Thank You, Jesus, my Lord. Amen."

# Membership Has Its Privileges

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 21, 2003

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 John 1:1–7

*“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”*

1 JOHN 1:3

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## Introduction

All right, what is fellowship? Well, we’re going to be talking about that today, because you were created to be a part of God’s family.

Would you take God’s Word and turn to the Epistle of John—1 John? That’s over near the back of the Scripture—not the Gospel of John, but 1 John. We’re going to be talking a little bit about fellowship, this morning. Let me read to you these verses that

deal with fellowship—1 John chapter 1, verse 1: *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, [and] which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)”*—now, notice verse 3—*“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son cleanseth us from all sin”* (1 John 1:1–7).

I’ve asked five people to come and stand here on the platform, and I’m going to ask them to come up here, if they will, for just a moment—those five people, wherever you are. Somebody hand me a microphone, if you will. I want you to just come right up here, young folks, and stand all the way across here. I want you to look at these people, because I want you to see if you can discern something about them all. Just come all the way across the middle, right over here, all the way across here. Lillian, way over here. All right. Now, I want you to give me your name, and tell me just a sentence about you—what you do, or whatever.

“I’m a homemaker.” You didn’t give me your name. “Lillian Morrison.” All right, and... “I’m a homemaker and retired, but not retired from serving the Lord.” Okay.

Who are you? “I’m Drew Morris. I play defensive tackle for the Cordova High School Football Team.” All right, defensive tackle.

Who are you? “I’m Valerie Augustus, and I’m a psychiatrist.” A psychiatrist? “That’s right.” All right, what do you think of him? All right.

Who are you? “Brooks Norman. I’m a pharmacist at an oncology clinic.” All right.

And, who are you? “Tim Kelly. I’m a pilot for Northwest Airlines.” All right.

Now, we’ve got a homemaker, a tackle—I won’t say “a shrink”—a psychiatrist, a pharmacist, and a pilot. Who can guess what all of these have in common? J-E-S-U-S—Jesus. That’s what they all have in common. Thank you. That’s all I want you to do. Just go sit down.

Now, what am I trying to say? What takes people like this—a young football player, a beautiful psychiatrist, a retired homemaker, a pilot, and a pharmacist... And, we could get any other five; I just asked Randy—I said, “Randy, get me five folks to come and stand up there this morning out of the Bellevue congregation.” Now friend, what makes us who we are? We have all kinds of ideas in this congregation. We have all kinds of aspirations. We have all kinds of tastes in music, in clothes, in style. We come from

different backgrounds, different ethnicities. What makes Bellevue not just an organization, but an organism? Jesus. The Church is not a business with Jesus as its president; the Church is a body with Jesus as its head. We are members far beyond church membership. We are members of the same body, which, in a way, is the same, but some people think of the church as an organization. It is an organism, and we are members together.

Now, listen to me: we are members together, and membership has its privileges. That's what I want to talk to you about today: privileges. Membership has its privileges. Look again in verse 3: *"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and...his Son Jesus Christ"* (1 John 1:3). The great privilege of membership is fellowship.

Now, last week we talked about worship as a purpose—and now, fellowship. Well, what is the difference between worship and fellowship? Well, they're inextricably interwoven. But, in worship, we express our love to God; in fellowship, we express our love to one another. And, the Greek word that we get our modern word "fellowship" from is a word, *koinonia*. You may have heard it, or you may not have heard it—*koinonia*. It's a good word for you to learn. And, that word means "to hold something in common, to have something in common." Now, here are five different people, yet they have something in common, which goes beyond something; it is someone, and that someone is the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, three things I want you to learn about our fellowship, this morning, and what makes our fellowship so wonderful.

## **I. We Have Fellowship in the Faith**

First of all, our fellowship is a fellowship in the faith. Got it? A fellowship in the faith. Look again in verse 1: *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)"* (1 John 1:1–2). We are bound together at Bellevue Baptist Church because of our common belief. Now, listen to me: belief and belonging are linked—belief and belonging are linked by a common faith.

### **A. Jesus Is the Eternal Fact of Our Faith**

Now, Jesus—follow me, now—is the eternal fact of our faith. *"That which was from the beginning"* (1 John 1:1)—there never was a time when Jesus was not. Don't get the idea that He had His beginning at Bethlehem. Oh, no. There never was a time when He was not. He is the eternal fact of our faith. He is from the beginning.

## **B. Jesus Is the Material Fact of Our Faith**

But, not only is He the eternal fact of our faith—He is a material fact of our faith. “Pastor, why do you say, ‘a material fact?’” Well, 1 John was written in answer to a cult. You know, there are always cults that come along. The devil has always wanted to muddy the water concerning the Lord Jesus Christ—always to confuse who Jesus Christ is, because, my brother, my sister, if you’re wrong about Jesus, you’re wrong. I don’t care what else you’re right about—if you’re wrong about Jesus, you’re wrong. And so, there came a cult early on, and these people were called Gnostics—G-N-O-S-T-I-C-S, Gnostics. Now, what does that mean? Well, it comes from the Greek word *epiginosko*. I know you’re blessed by that. But, it means “to know.” An agnostic is a person that says, “I don’t know.” The Gnostics were the people who said, “Hey buddy, we do know.” As a matter of fact, you could just call them “the know-it-alls.” They had this super-abounding knowledge, they thought, but they didn’t get it from the Word of God. They thought it up. We have a lot of homemade theology in the world today. And, these people said that Jesus Christ did not have a real material body; they said Jesus was more like a phantom. And so, they thought that matter was evil; and so, Jesus could not have a flesh-and-bone body. And so, they said, “Well, He just appeared to have body. He was more like a phantom.”

And so, John is going to knock that in the head, and he says, “Oh, no. He is an eternal fact. He’s from the beginning, and He is a material fact.” Notice what he says here: “Look at the evidence.”

### **1. Visible Evidence**

He says, “*That...which we have seen*” (1 John 1:1). There is the sight evidence—what we would call the “visible evidence.” And, when he says, “*looked upon*” (1 John 1:1), it comes from the word *theaomai*, which we get our word “theater” from. John is saying, “Hey, we saw Him with our eyes.”

### **2. Audible Evidence**

And, not only did we see Him—there’s the visible evidence—there’s the audible evidence, “*that...which we have heard*” (1 John 1:1). Had you been there with a tape recorder, you could have recorded the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **3. Physical Evidence**

And, there was the physical evidence, “*that which [we’ve] handled*” (1 John 1:1). They say, “Hey, we touched Him.” I imagine Jesus about the size of this young football player that we had up here. He’s probably about 6-feet-tall, 185 pounds. But, I don’t know what height He was, how much He weighed, but He had a height; He did have a weight. What John is saying—“There is audible evidence, visible evidence, material evidence, physical evidence.” Jesus is a fact—He is an eternal fact; Jesus Christ is a material fact.



### **C. Jesus Is the Central Fact of Our Faith**

And then, he goes on to say Jesus Christ is a central fact. Look at the last part of verse 1: *“That which...our hands have handled, of the Word of life”* (1 John 1:1). You want to hear from God? Hear from Jesus.

#### **4. Jesus Is God’s First Word**

Jesus is God’s first Word. *“In the beginning was the Word”* (John 1:1).

#### **5. Jesus Is God’s Full Word**

Jesus is God’s full Word. He is the Alpha and the Omega—that is, the bookends of the alphabet. This book I have here right now—it has only 26 letters in it, and it’s all the Word of God. You see, Jesus is the A to Z. He’s the Alpha and Omega; He is God’s full Word.

#### **6. Jesus Is God’s Final Word**

And friend, He is God’s final Word. You’re not going to get any more. If you miss Jesus, you’ve missed it. Listen to your pastor this morning. Friend, when you’ve said, “Jesus,” you’ve said it all. You don’t need to say any more, and you dare not say any less. Jesus is the Word of life. If you miss Jesus, you’ve missed life—I don’t care what else you have. Now, Jesus Christ is the center of our fellowship.

### **D. Jesus Is the Personal Fact of Our Faith**

And, not only is He a material fact, not only is He an eternal fact, not only is He the central fact, but He is a personal fact. Look, if you will, in verse 2: *“(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)”* (1 John 1:2). Now, John is not giving an argument; he’s giving a testimony. He’s saying, “Look, let me tell you what I know.” It’s not a religious argument. He’s sharing his personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. And friend, that’s what binds us together. What we have is fellowship in the faith. That’s the first point.

## **II. We Have Fellowship in the Father**

Now, let’s move to the second point. Not only do we have fellowship in the faith—and that faith is centered in the Lord Jesus Christ—but our fellowship in the faith leads to fellowship in the Father. Now look, if you will now, in verse 3: *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you”—what had he seen and heard? Jesus. Now listen—“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ”* (1 John 1:3). You don’t know the Father if you don’t know the Son. There is no way to God the Father apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. And, you see, when we know Jesus Christ, then we know the Father. And, by the way, you can’t know the Father

apart from Jesus Christ.

You see, you have nothing in common with the Father. Do you remember that scripture we read to you—verses 5 and 6? Look at it: *“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth”* (1 John 1:5–6). You see, light and darkness have nothing in common—nothing! And, sinful man and holy God have nothing in common apart from the Lord Jesus Christ who was God of very God, but left Heaven, came to earth, and took upon Him human flesh, so He could be like we are. Why did Jesus Christ take human flesh to be like we are? He had to be a human to redeem us. He had to die on the cross, for *“without [the] shedding of blood is not remission [of sin]”* (Hebrews 9:22). And so, we, in darkness, had nothing in common with Him, who is light. But Jesus, in order that we might have this *koinonia*, left Heaven, became a human being, took our sins, carried them to the cross, and when He carried them to the cross, He paid in full. He put out the darkness, filled our world with light, and now we have become one with Him.

Now, listen—here’s the central fact of Christianity (we’re talking about fellowship): He became one with us, that we might become one with Him. He came to earth, that we might go to Heaven. He died for us to remove the difference between darkness and light, that we might have fellowship through Jesus Christ. You will never—no, never, never, never, ever—know God apart from Jesus Christ. You just can’t do it, no more than light and darkness can mingle together. (They cannot.) Now, here’s a blessed thought: Jesus, who existed in the glory in Spirit from before the world was formed, came to this earth and took human flesh. He became the God-man.

Now, He did not lay that human flesh aside when He went back to Heaven. He is there in Heaven now with the nail prints in His hands. He’s there. Listen to me: when Jesus became man, He became man forever. He didn’t lay aside His deity, but He took up humanity. It’s just as big a heresy to deny His humanity as it is to deny His deity. He is the God-man. Now, here’s the blessing: He became forever like me, that I might be forever like Him. That’s what it’s all about. He became forever like me, that I might be forever like Him. And, He is the very Son of God; and, therefore, I become a son, a daughter, of God. We have fellowship in the Father. This is the fellowship of the gospel. You see, when you get saved, the Bible says you become a *“[partaker] of the divine nature”* (2 Peter 1:4)—2 Peter 1 and verse 4. And, the word “partaker” and the word *koinonia* are the same word in the Greek language.

### **III. We Have Fellowship in the Family**

Now, here’s the third thing about our fellowship I want you to notice. Not only do we have fellowship in the faith—and that fellowship in the faith leads to fellowship in the

Father—but when we have fellowship in the faith, believing in Jesus and, therefore, have fellowship in the Father, we are born into the family of God. We become the sons and daughters of God. As many as received him, to them gave he the right—the power, the authority—to become the children of God. Then, it follows, as night follows day—fellowship in the faith, fellowship in the Father; fellowship in the Father, fellowship in the family. That’s how we get in the family. Now, that’s why he says in verse 4: *“These things [we’ve written] unto you”* (1 John 1:4). Look at it again in verse 3: *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you”—that’s fellowship in the faith—“that ye...may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father”—fellowship in the Father—“and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full”* (1 John 1:3–4).

Now, we have fellowship in the family. And friend, fellowship in the family gives us two things. Number one: it gives us unity; and number two, it gives you joy—gives us joy. *“These things write we unto you, that your joy [might] be full”* (1 John 1:4). Jesus is the source of our unity, and Jesus is the source of our joy.

How would you like to pastor Bellevue Baptist Church? Say, “I wouldn’t.” You would be amazed how many different ideas we have in our congregation. This past week, somebody came to me and said, “You know, I think we ought to have more contemporary music.” Somebody else came to me and said, “You know, I don’t like this contemporary music.” Both of them godly people—both of them godly people. We have people who come from all walks of life. And folks, some people may like the color of this carpet, and some people may not. Some people, like myself, don’t like that tie that man is wearing this morning. I think that’s an ugly tie. He has no taste in ties. But, I’m not going to put him out of the synagogue because of that. I am telling you, folks, we have all kinds in our church. But, you listen to your pastor: we have J-E-S-U-S—Jesus—and He’s the One that binds us together. Say “amen.”

There is fellowship in the faith. Jesus is the eternal fact of our faith. Jesus is the material fact of our faith. Jesus is the central fact of our faith. Jesus is the personal fact of our faith. And, when we have Jesus, we have God the Father. And, when we have God the Father, we are brothers and sisters, and we have fellowship. What a fellowship! What a joy divine! That’s what makes the Church the great Church that she is, and will keep her that way.

Now, let’s talk a little bit about that fellowship—that *koinonia*.

#### **A. Fellowship Shares**

May I tell you that fellowship shares? Put this verse down—Proverbs 17, verses 17: *“A friend loveth at all times”—“a friend loveth at all times”—“and a brother is born for adversity”* (Proverbs 17:17). You want to know what real fellowship is? Get in trouble,

and see if people walk out on you. Real brothers don't do that. *"A brother is born for adversity"* (Proverbs 17:17). Fellowship multiplies our joys. Fellowship divides our sorrows. Fellowship in this church will strengthen with prayer. It will bless with love; it will encourage with hope. *The Bible does not teach a "Lone Ranger Christianity."* I need you; you need me. We need one another. Fellowship shares.

### **B. Fellowship Sharpens**

But, not only does fellowship share—fellowship sharpens. Put this verse down—Proverbs 27, verse 17: *"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend"* (Proverbs 27:17). Real fellowship will put a keen edge on your life. Bad friends will blunt and dull your testimony and your witness.

Since I've picked on this man about his tie, pitiful tie—that's just envy speaking. You know that, don't you?—I want to tell you something: I'll just turn to him like I was saying about these others. This man puts an edge on my life. I work with him. I pray with him. We work together. He is a godly man. And, when I'm around Mark Dougherty and come away, I come away a better person. I'm a better person because of Dr. Gray Allison. Iron sharpens iron. You're blessed if you've got some good friends who are godly friends—a fellowship in the Lord Jesus Christ. Fellowship shares. Fellowship sharpens.

### **C. Fellowship Sustains**

Fellowship sustains; it sustains us. *"A brother is born for adversity"* (Proverbs 17:17). I've said, if you want to find out who your real friends are, just make a mistake. Not original with me, but a great definition of friendship is "a brother is somebody who walks in when everybody else walks out." Now, we're in this thing together. There's not a mother's child in this church who has not made mistakes, who is perfect. We need the fellowship of brothers and sisters in Christ so we can make it. And, there is a deep, deep, deep longing, an innate, a God-given longing for fellowship. That's why we have the Church. We don't have a "Lone Ranger Christianity."

Let me tell you four things that everybody needs, and you need, and they're wrapped up in this word "joy." This is what he says in this scripture in verse 4: *"these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full"* (1 John 1:4). Let me tell you what people want. Let me tell you how we can enrich the fellowship here in Bellevue Baptist Church.

## **7. People Want Acceptance**

Number one: People want acceptance—acceptance. People need to be accepted—not because they're perfect. Jesus accepted the disciples not because they were perfect, but because they needed Him. Real fellowship says to the other person, "You are important to me." When I come to church on Sunday, not only am I saying that God is important to me; I'm saying that you, my brothers and sisters, are important to me. You

are self-centered—you are proud and arrogant—if you say, “I don’t need the Church,” because what you’re saying is, “All that matters to me is what I need.” No, you need to come—not only for what you can get, but for what you can give. And, part of what you give is to encourage. The Bible says, “[We’re 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). People need acceptance. And, when people come to Bellevue Baptist Church, they need to know that they are loved and welcome. You say, “What if they’re some of those old awful sinners?” Go look in the mirror, mister—that’s what you are. God, in mercy, has redeemed us. And, there’s not a perfect person in this church. And, people need to be welcomed in the strong name of Jesus. I’m telling you what four things people need. They need acceptance.

### **8. People Want Appreciation**

I’ll tell you what else they need: they need appreciation. The human soul craves appreciation. Sometimes I’ve preached and said, “Oh, no, don’t.” Somebody says, “I liked that sermon. I appreciate you.” “Oh, no, no, don’t tell me that.” If you want to tell me, go ahead. Listen, a man’s lying if he says he doesn’t want appreciation. In my estimation, he is. Mark Twain, who certainly wasn’t a Bible-believing Christian, said he could live for three weeks on a compliment. We need to learn to appreciate people. You need to appreciate the people in your church. You need to appreciate your church staff. You need to appreciate those people over there working in the nursery, so we can sit in here in some sort of a semblance of peace. Isn’t that right, Brother Gene? Need some more nursery workers, don’t we? Listen, appreciate people. Appreciate this choir and their faithfulness. Appreciate this orchestra. Many times, we hear the choir, and we just think the orchestra somehow just happens. It doesn’t. Appreciate Carter Threlkeld. Appreciate a man like Randy. I said, “Randy, I need five people.” That’s all I had to say, and five people stand up here this morning. I didn’t pick those out; Randy did. People want acceptance. People need appreciation.

### **9. People Want Affirmation**

And, people need affirmation. This is a negative world. More people will dump on you with all kinds of negativism and so forth. Affirm people. People need to be affirmed. Bill Glass, who is a great evangelist—great football player from Baylor University. I saw Bill Glass play football. Boy, I’m telling you, what a man; what a football player—but he is preaching primarily, now, in prisons. Bill Glass said, “I ask, when I speak to prisoners, frequently this question: ‘How many of you had fathers who said, ‘Boy, you’re going to eventually end up in prison?’’ Almost every one of them lifted their hands.” Think about it—a self-fulfilling prophecy: “You’re going to end up in prison,” rather than affirming him and saying, “Son, you can do this,” and, “Son, you can do that.” People need acceptance. People need appreciation. People need affirmation.

## 10. People Want Assurance

And, people need assurance. They need to know there is hope in this world, there is help, there is truth, there is love. We need people who'll say, "I care, and I understand."

I was reading about the giant redwoods and sequoias that grow there in California—these trees that tower up in the sky over 30 stories, over 300 feet. I've stood there, and looked up at them, and just in awe at these giants that have stood there for century after century after century. You would think that a tree like that—that tall, 30-stories-tall—would have roots that would go down, down, down into the ground, but they don't. Their roots are shallow, and they spread out all over like this to get the moisture. And, the moisture that is down that deep is not enough moisture, so the roots spread out like this. How do these trees exist, and how do they stay there so long? I'll tell you how they exist and how they stay there so long: they grow in clusters, and their roots all intertwine. And, a tree alone couldn't stand. The wind would topple it over. But, together they stand. And, I'm telling you, brothers and sisters, you need me, and I need you—and we need one another. Say "amen." It's when our roots intertwine that the winds, and the storms, and the heartaches, and the tears don't blow us over.

## Conclusion

We need fellowship; we need this *koinonia*. And, our fellowship is a fellowship, number one, in the faith. You cannot have it without Jesus Christ. *"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that [you] may have fellowship with us"* (1 John 1:3). And, that fellowship in the Son brings us to fellowship in the Father, and that fellowship in the Father brings us to fellowship in the family.

Woodrow Kroll shared this story. And, I don't know whether it's rooted in history or not, but the truth of the story is the important thing. There was a man, a wealthy man, who was an art collector. This man had a son. Both of them were connoisseurs of art, and they would collect art: Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Renoir—very beautiful art, and a very wealthy family. The father and son did that. It was a great source of fellowship to them. But, one day, the son was called into the service, because there was war, and the son went off to war. And, shortly after that, the father received a telegram that his beloved son had been killed in battle. It broke the old man's heart. Somehow his pictures, his paintings, the portraits, the masterpieces, didn't seem to mean as much to him anymore, because this was something they had done as father and son.

One day, on Christmas morning, there was a knock at the door. And, there was a young man standing there, who said, "Sir, you don't know me, but I was a friend to your son. We had an interest in art together"—he was in the service—"I was the one who retrieved his body when he was killed in action. But, what you don't know, sir, is this—that we were such good friends, I asked him if I could do a portrait of him. And sir, I did



a portrait of him, and I have it here in this package. It's Christmas; and sir, I would like to give you this portrait of your son, who was my dear friend." You can imagine what a poignant scene that was. And, the father thanked the young man for the portrait, took the portrait, and hung it in his house over the mantle. And, it was a good painting. Certainly, the young man was not a Rembrandt, but it was a great painting. It was a good likeness of his son. It was very precious to the father, because it came on Christmas Day and because of the love that he had for his son.

About a year after that, the father died, and the entire gallery of art was to be sold. And, the father said, "It is to be sold Christmas Day." So, they all gathered there on Christmas Day, waiting to bid for these priceless art treasures—this great collection. The auctioneer stood up and said, "We're going to begin bidding, and the first item is the picture of the son." Someone in the back said, "Who painted that? Nobody knows about that." "Nonetheless, according to the will, this is the first picture—the first painting that's to be auctioned." Nobody made a bid. The auctioneer said, "Is there not any bid?" And, one man said, "I knew that boy. He was a fine boy. I would like his picture." And, for one bid, at a very minimal sum, he bought the picture. The auctioneer said, "The auction is over. It's done." Somebody said, "No, no, it's not over. Let's get to the masterpieces." He said, "I'm sorry. I was forbidden to tell you this before, but it is written in the will that this picture was to be auctioned first with this proviso—whoever gets the son gets it all"—"whoever gets the son gets it all."

Whether that's a true story, I don't know, but I know the truth of that story is true—I know the truth of that story is true. I know that I know that I know that I know, friend, when you get Jesus, you get it all. In Him is the fullness of the Godhead bodily. God loves His own dear Son. And, if you'll love His dear Son, I'll tell you, you will be in God's forever family. There's the fellowship of the faith, fellowship in the Father, and that leads to fellowship in the family.

Look up here, and look at me. Let me tell you something: I've been on the trail a number of years, and the best people I know are in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. I hear people talk about hypocrites and all this stuff. There may be some, but I am so glad I'm a part of the family of God. I am so glad that I know Jesus and I know you.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed; and no one is stirring. If you are not yet in the family, when you receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, it's at that time that God becomes your Father and everybody else who is in the family becomes a brother and sister. You are a member, and membership has its privileges.

If you want to be saved, would you pray a prayer like this—just pray it silently but fervently: "Dear God, I need You, and I want You. Thank You for loving me. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for dying for me. Thank You that You shed Your blood on the cross for my



sin. Thank You that You paid in full my sin debt. I believe that You were raised from the dead. I believe You're the Son of God. I receive You now by faith—by faith—not by feeling, but by faith—as my Lord and Savior and Master. I give You my life. I receive You into my life as my Lord and Savior. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be, and help me, Jesus, never to be ashamed of You. Thank You for saving me. Now, Lord Jesus, because You died for me, I will live for You, and I will not be ashamed of You. Give me the courage to make it public. In Your name. Amen”?

Now, look up here. Don't even gather your books. Just look right here at me. We're going to sing an invitational hymn. If you prayed and asked Jesus Christ to come into your heart, I'm so grateful for you. I'm glad for what has happened in your life. Now, there's something I'm going to ask you to do that will help settle it, and seal it, and show that you really mean business. I'm going to ask you to acknowledge your faith in Jesus by coming forward. Walking a church aisle doesn't save you; that's not the point. The point is it shows you're not ashamed of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “If you're ashamed 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). But, Jesus said, “If you'll confess Me before me, I'll confess you before My Father” (Matthew 10:32).

So, I've asked a minister of our church to stand at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front. And then, for those of you in the balcony, a minister will be standing under the banner over there in that corner that says, “Redeemer,” or on this corner over here that says, “Messiah,” for those in the balcony. You just move that way. But, if you prayed with me and asked Christ into your heart this morning—or perhaps you did it in your bedroom, in your office, some other place, and you've not yet acknowledged Him—when we stand and sing, Lord, I believe, Lord, I receive, Lord, I confess You now.

I want you to just leave your seat, make your way down any of these aisles, and say to the minister, “I am trusting Jesus.” We'll rejoice with you, give you some scripture to stand on, seal it in prayer. It'll take just a few moments. If I could do it for you, I would, but I can't. You can do it. It'll be one of the greatest things you've ever done. And, don't worry about these people here. They're all praying for you. Most of them have done exactly what I'm asking you to do. Just come and say, “I'm trusting in Jesus.” We'll want to give you some scripture and answer any questions we can answer.

Others of you are saved, and you know it. You've already acknowledged Christ as your personal Savior, but you need a church home—a local church home. And, I want to invite you to come this morning and say—if you already know that you're saved and that's settled, you come and say—“I want to place my membership here,” and we'll tell you how you may become a member of this wonderful church and be a part of the

fellowship, the family of God.

Let's pray one more time. Father God, I pray that You would bring precious souls down this aisle to say "yes" to Jesus. In His wonderful name. Amen.

You step out on the first stanza. Stand together as we sing.

# A Formula for Fellowship

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 15, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 1:3–10**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Your Sin Must Be Exposed to the Light
  - A. The Holy Spirit Will Convict You Legitimately
  - B. The Holy Spirit Will Convict You Specifically
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- II. Your Sin Must Be Expressed to the Lord
  - A. Express It Immediately
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Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**ake God's Word, and turn with me, please, to 1 John chapter 1—1 John chapter 1. And, in a moment, I'm going to read to you, beginning in verse 3—1 John chapter 1.

When I was a younger preacher, I used to pastor a church, a college church, down in Florida on the edge of the Everglades. And, there was a sugar mill out there in the little town of Fellsmere—wonderful little town. We had a delightful time. And, it's our joy, Joyce and I, to serve the Lord in that little church. I had a deacon out there who would hunt frogs for a living. He was a professional frogger. He would go out at nighttime on one of these airboats and gig frogs, and he made a handsome living hunting frogs out there in the swamps.

And, he told me a story one time I'll never forget. He said, "Before I was saved, not only did we have frogs, but we poached alligators." He said, "Actually, if you got a big alligator, his hide was worth far more than anything you could get that night for frog legs." And, he said, "We didn't shoot the alligators. But actually, we would shine our headlight on them." And, he bore a light between his eyes—a very powerful beam. "We'd see the gator's eyes, and then we would take our boat and come alongside him, keeping that light right on his eyes. And, he would stay there on top of the water, and," he said, "we kept a big hammer beneath the seat." And, these men sat up high in that boat on a seat that's about *that high* off the floor of the boat. And, he said, "We'd keep a hammer under there, and we'd come alongside that alligator and hit him between the

eyes with the hammer. We didn't shoot him, because if you shot him, the game warden would hear and the game warden would come. So," he said, "we'd just hit him real hard with that hammer."

This deacon, Brother Neal, said to me—he said, "Pastor, I saw the biggest alligator I believe I've ever seen. I knew he was very valuable. I didn't want to miss him. So," he said, "I idled my motor and came up right alongside this alligator. And," he said, "I took my hammer—a ball peen hammer—that I had under my seat. And," he said, "I gave a mighty swing." Now, you'd have to know Neal. He's a small guy—wiry, muscular. He said, "I gave a mighty swing." He said, "But, when I did, I missed the alligator's head. And," he said, "the force of that hammer coming all the way around flipped me out of the boat, straddled the alligator." This is the part that tickled me: he said, "Pastor, I got back in the boat without getting wet!" I can believe that—I can believe that.

I've thought about that story many times, and I've thought, "That's so much like a Christian." You know, a Christian can slip and fall into sin. But, I believe a true child of God would fear sin as much as that man feared that alligator. And, a true child of God, though he may slip and though he may fall, he has a desire for a quick recovery just like brother Neal did so long ago.

And, I want to talk to you about that recovery. What happens when you slip? What happens when you fall? What happens when you fall? What happens when you find yourself straddling an alligator? Well, now listen, if you will here, to 1 John chapter 1, verse 3: *"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ"*—that's the reason I've called this message "A Formula for Fellowship": he's telling you how to have fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ and with God the Father—*"And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full"*—the way to have fullness of joy is to have fellowship with God and with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Now, having said that, he begins to tell you how—*"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light"*—L-I-G-H-T—*"and in him is no darkness at all. If we say...we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"*—the formula for fellowship is a cleansed life, my friend. Notice verse 8—*"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us"* (1 John 1:3–10).

Life is short; death is sure.

Sin, the curse; Christ, the cure (author unknown).

We know that. We know that sin is what does all of the devastating things in this world. But, how do we deal specifically with sin?

First of all, you have to understand that sin is just what it is: it is sin. God only forgives sin; God doesn't forgive mistakes. Now, I'm not saying God judges you for mistakes. He doesn't either judge you or condemn you, or forgive them. But, if you call your sins "mistakes," then you'll never deal with them. We need to call sin what it is.

Now, there are people who were taught that man is just a result of blind force—it all just happened—that nobody plus nothing equals everything; we're all just here as a result of blind force. Well, if you believe that, then you don't believe in sin. You believe that what we call "sin" is just an incident, or an accident, or sort of a stumble upward as man is progressing. You know, they believe we've come from some primordial soup and we're on our way up. Well, we've gone from soup to nuts. We are not progressing as a race or anything else. Man started, made in the image of God, in perfection, and it is sin that has ruined the human race. But, if you don't understand sin for what it is, if you don't see sin as an affront to a holy God, if you call sin by some other name—a "misjudgment," a "malfunction," a "mistake," or a "sickness"—if you say that man is ill, but not evil; he's weak, but not wicked; he's sick, but not sinful—if you say that, then you're never going to deal with your sin as you ought, and you're never going to have fellowship with God.

You see, the problem with today's society is we all have a burden of guilt without a sense of sin. The burden of guilt is there. It shows up in many, many ways. But, so many of us don't see ourselves as sinners needing to be forgiven; we see ourselves as people who made mistakes who need to be fixed. And so, we're trying to fix ourselves and somehow compensate for the problem, or commiserate with it, without getting cleansed and without getting forgiven.

Well, I want to talk to you today about God's formula for fellowship—not the world's formula. The world has a lot of different ideas. The evolutionist, as I've already mentioned, he believes man is on his way upward and time will take care of it all. Well, the problem with that is the longer the society goes on, the deeper we sink. And, if you believe you're a cousin of King Kong, well, you can believe that if you want to. You ought to know your ancestors better than I do. I don't believe that. I reject with all my being "monkey mythology." The evolutionist never sees sin for what it is.

And then, there's the educator. He says, "Well, it's not time; it's education that's going to handle the sin problem." Well, if that is true, then we would think that people with the most knowledge would be the least sinful. Try that one on Nazi Germany.

There is probably not a nation in the world that has a higher level of education than the Nazis when Hitler took over.

When I was in college, I had a course in philosophy. I so admired my philosophy professor, who also taught me Greek. I listened to this man as he taught philosophy, and I listened to him as he taught Greek. And, I said, “There’s a man who has a head full of knowledge.” One day, this man went out to a lonely place, spread some newspapers on the ground, and then put a pistol to his temple, and took his own life. He was professor of philosophy. He knew the Bible languages. He knew very much. But, education, for him, was not the answer.

Science tells us that man—his problem is just defective genes, that somehow we could just, by genetic engineering, maybe we could solve the sin problem—if we could just marry Superman to the Bionic Woman, then maybe somehow we would deal with the sin problem. But, those who are the most gifted, those who are the most handsome, those who are the most strong, those who are the most intelligent—they still have the sin problem.

The sociologist tells us that the problem is environmental. If that’s true, then why aren’t those in the best environment—why haven’t they dealt with the sin problem? Of course, they’ve not escaped the sin problem. None of these are the answer. The psychologist and the psychiatrist—he does his best to remove the guilt feeling, but he cannot remove the guilt. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ is the answer to the sin problem, because through the gospel of Jesus Christ, God forgives, God cleanses—and here’s the wonderful part—God forgets our sin.

Before we really get into the heart of the matter, let me just give you a couple of (two or three) verses to tell you how God deals with your sin when He saves you, when you get saved. Hebrews 8, verse 12: the Bible says, “*Their iniquities will I remember no more*” (Hebrews 8:12). Now, think about that: “*their iniquities*”—your sins—“*their iniquities will I remember no more*” (Hebrews 8:12). Then, Isaiah chapter 43 and verse 25: God says, “*I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins*” (Isaiah 43:25). Twice God says, “I will not remember.” Over and over again, God tells us that He’s put our sin in the grave of His forgetfulness, never, never to come up again. God has forgotten your sin if you’re saved. It is gone—buried, and gone, and forgiven.

Now, that doesn’t mean that God forgets it intellectually. That doesn’t mean that God cannot recall it. That isn’t what that means at all. God could never, ever truly learn anything or forget anything because He knows everything, and nothing escapes His knowledge. So, when God says He will forget our sin, it doesn’t mean that He doesn’t remember it anymore intellectually. God cannot forget or remember anything, in that

sense of the word. If He did, He would change, and He says He doesn't change (Malachi 3:6). I sometimes ask people, "Has it ever occurred to you that nothing ever occurs to God?" God is God.

So, what does He mean when He says, "I will remember their sins no more" (Hebrews 8:12)? He says, "I will remember them against you no more." God does not remember them as sins, but God remembers them as forgiven sins. Now, listen to this: God remembers them as forgiven sins, and, therefore, what God has forgotten as a sin, I can forget as a sin. I can remember my sin intellectually. You say, "Adrian, can you remember when you told a lie, or you had a lustful thought, or when you lost your temper, or when you were full of pride?" Yes, but thank God I can remember it as a forgiven sin; I can remember it as sin buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness. So, when we get saved, when you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, when you're born again, all of your sins are forgiven. "[And] though your sins be as scarlet, they [become whiter than] snow" (Isaiah 1:18), and they are put in the grave of God's forgetfulness.

Now, that happens, and your sin—past, present, and future—will never, ever be brought up against you anymore. We talked about this last week: "*Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin*" (Romans 4:8). He will not do it. He'll never put it on your account. That sin is gone; it is forgiven—not only sin that you have committed, but sin that you will commit, so far as coming up against you punitively. If God were to mark one-half of one cent against your account, you'd be a lost sinner and on the way to Hell. You understand that, don't you? God has forgiven you. God has cleansed you. God has made you—not only where your past is forgiven, but your future is secure. There is never a time when God will ever mark any sin to your account, so far as a lost sinner is concerned.

But now, having said that, I want you to look very carefully—look in verse 6: "*If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*" (1 John 1:6–7). "Well," you say, "Pastor Rogers, I thought you said that when we get saved, all of our sin is buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness. And now, he is mentioning sin in the life of a child again." You have to understand that the child of God knows God in two ways.

That is, there is the matter of sonship. Look in verse 6: "*If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie*" (1 John 1:6). Sonship is the relationship we have when we're born again. When I am born into the family of God, I become a son of God. That is settled. When you are born into God's family, you can never ever be unborn. But, there's also fellowship: "*If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth*" (1 John 1:6).



Now, I became a Rogers when I was born into the Rogers family. I can never be unborn. No matter what I might do, I'm my father's child. When you're saved, you're born into God's family. You can never, ever be out of God's family. Got it? That is sonship. But, if you disobey your Heavenly Father, then there's the matter of fellowship. Sonship is once for all. Fellowship changes. I was born a Rogers; I am a Rogers—and that is sonship—I will be for all eternity. Nothing can undo what happened that moment that I was conceived and born into the Rogers family. That is fixed; that is an eternal fact, and it can never be changed. But, there were times when my dad would tell me to cut the grass, and I wouldn't cut the grass. Or, my dad would tell me to clean the garage, and I wouldn't clean the garage. Or, he would tell me to do this or not to do that, and I did it or didn't do it—whichever was the wrong thing to do or not to do. And folks, fellowship would change. Sonship didn't change, but fellowship would change. And, my dad—he knew how to apply the board of education to the seat of knowledge. And, of course, I tell people facetiously, “Dad never whipped us on an empty stomach; he turned us over, and that's where he whipped us.” But, he knew how to do it, and he did it well. And, I didn't like it then, because the Bible says, *“No chastening for the present [time seems] to be joyous, but grievous: [but] afterward [he yields] the peaceable fruit of righteousness [to those that] are exercised thereby”* (Hebrews 12:11). And so, God, like a loving Father, chastens those whom He has received (Hebrews 12:6). And so, sonship—that is fixed by birth. But, fellowship—that is determined as to whether or not we are obeying the Father's instructions.

Now, your sin will never be brought up against you in order to condemn you and cast you into Hell if you are saved—if you are truly saved. But, your sin can interrupt fellowship with the Father. That's the reason that the Bible says, *“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son [cleanses] us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7). So, it's one thing to have sonship; it's another thing to have fellowship.

Now, what I am talking to you about today is a formula for fellowship—how to know that you're right, how to know that you're cleansed. When you stumble, when you fall, when you're straddling an alligator, how do you get back? Well, that's what we're talking about. Now, there are three things I want you to learn, and I want you to look in 1 John, because they are all three right here. These are three very wonderful things that you must learn if you want to get in fellowship and stay in fellowship with God, your Father.

## **I. Your Sin Must Be Exposed to the Light**

Number one: Your sin must be exposed to the light. I want you to see something very interesting here. Look, if you will, in verse 6. Do you see the little phrase, *“If we say”* (1

John 1:6)? Look in verse 8. Do you see the little phrase, *“If we say”* (1 John 1:8)? Look in verse 10. Do you see the little phrase, *“If we say”* (1 John 1:10)? Each one of these verses begins with that little trinity of words: “if we say,” “if we say,” “if we say.” Now, what’s he talking about? What he’s talking about—people, here, who somehow deny their sin. You’d think that the Apostle John was in a testimony meeting, and he could hear people standing up and saying one thing, when he knew that the other thing was true in their life.

And, this is the evolution of a lie. Let me show it to you. Look, if you will. First of all, when a child of God gets sin in his or her heart, many times they begin to lie to other people. Look in verse 6: *“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth”* (1 John 1:6). Now, what happens is this: a man, a woman, a boy, a girl, who is truly saved, been born again, his sin is forgiven and forgotten... Then, he lets some sin get in his heart and his life, and he comes to church on Sunday morning; and he sits here. And, we sing these songs, and he sings, too. We study the Bible, and he says, “Amen.” People meet him and are saying, “How you doing?” “Fine.” “You walking in victory?” “Yes, I am.” He’s just lying—he’s just lying. And, he knows it, but he begins to lie to others, because he cannot confess what is in his heart.

And, there are folks like that sitting here. I dare say there are hundreds—hundreds—right here, and many listening by television. You know that your heart is not right with God, but you don’t want the person next to you to know it. I mean, you know it. You know that your heart is not right with God, but you don’t want the person next to you to know it. You don’t want your wife to know it, your husband to know it, your children to know it, your mom and dad to know it, so you’re just acting like everything is just fine. A lot of folks just like that here this morning. So, you begin by lying to others.

Now, look in verse 8: *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves”* (1 John 1:8). Now, if you tell that lie long enough, you’re going to begin to believe it. You’re going to begin to say, “Yeah, that’s true. I’m all right.” You make some allowance for your sin, and you deceive yourself. You become a spiritual schizophrenic. You lie to yourself. That’s the way, really, to depression and a mental breakdown. But, it’s not finished yet. And then, look in verse 10: *“If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us”* (1 John 1:10). We end up in controversy with God; we end up lying to God. The Holy Spirit says, “That’s a sin,” and we say, “It’s not a sin.” So, you make God a liar. You’re calling God a liar, really. And so, what you do—what you do: you just try to hide your sin. And, that’s the most dangerous thing we can do—is to conceal our sin, to say to others, and to say to ourselves, and to say to God that there is no sin in our lives.

Now, what we need to do is to expose this sin to the light, and that's what I want you to do today—not in order to condemn you. You say, "Pastor, you're trying to make me feel bad? Dredge up my sin?" No, I'm trying to show you today how to have fellowship with God. I'm trying to show you how to walk out of this place leaping, and dancing, and praising God—to say, "I'm absolutely, totally, wonderfully cleansed and clean, and I have fellowship with God and fellowship with one another." Now, that sin, therefore, must be exposed to the light. It says, *"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another"* (1 John 1:7).

And so, what does light do? Light just simply reveals what's wrong. You see, the closer you get to a bright light, the more imperfections show up in any object. If you want to know whether there is any sin in your heart and in your life today, just expose it to the light. Just say, "Holy Spirit of God, search me, try me, and know my heart, and see if there is some wicked way in me. Turn the searchlight of Your holiness into my heart and into my life." And, the Holy Spirit of God will convict you of any sin that's in your heart and in your life today. I'm not talking about sin that will condemn you and send you to Hell; I'm talking about sin that will ruin and destroy your fellowship. Just open up your heart to the light of God. Right now, just say, "Here I am, Lord. Look in me." You don't have to do morbid introspection on yourself. Just simply open yourself up to the Lord, and ask God to show you—ask God to reveal that sin to you. *"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another"* (1 John 1:7). Now, that's Holy Spirit conviction, when the Holy Spirit of God reveals what may be wrong in your heart and in your life.

Point—and a good point—I want you to listen to it very carefully. Listen very carefully everybody here. You need to learn the difference between Holy Spirit conviction and Satan's accusation. Now, listen very carefully, because at this point, if you don't get this point, you're going to miss something very, very important: the Holy Spirit of God convicts you of sin; the devil accuses you of sin. There's a vast difference. It's not only the Holy Spirit who will bring up your sin; the devil will bring up your sin, also. Now, let me tell you the difference. How does the Holy Spirit of God convict you of sin? When you just open up your life to the light, when you say, "Here I am, Lord; here I am," how does the Holy Spirit of God convict you?

#### **A. The Holy Spirit Will Convict You Legitimately**

Well, first of all, the Holy Spirit of God will convict you legitimately. Do you have that? The Holy Spirit of God will convict you legitimately. The Holy Spirit of God will say, "This is the sin that has come into your life that has not yet been confessed and cleansed." Now, the devil will accuse you illegitimately. Do you see? The devil will bring up that

which has already been cleansed and already been forgiven. He will bring that up and bring it back to your remembrance again. Now, the Bible says if it has been cleansed, it will never ever be brought up again: “[God] is faithful and just to forgive us our [sin]”—verse 9—“and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Now, suppose you told a lie. Let’s suppose that you told your wife a lie. And, the Holy Spirit of God convicted you of that sin, and you confessed it. You said, “God, I’m sorry. Forgive me, and cleanse me.” Well, what happened to that sin? It is gone. It is forgiven. It is cleansed—never ever to be brought up again. If it comes up again, it is the devil, this time, accusing you. You know, the devil is called “*the accuser of [the] brethren*” (Revelation 12:10). He accuses you before God, and he accuses you before your own conscience. And, the devil will say, “Do you remember when you told that lie to your wife?” And, he’ll bring it up again to torment you with it. Now, you see, listen, before you sin, the devil says, “Go ahead and do it. You can get away with it.” And, after you sin, the devil says, “You’ll never get away with it. You’ll never get away with it.” He leads you into sin, and then he accuses you for doing what he led you into doing. But, the Holy Spirit of God will only convict you of sin legitimately.

If that sin... Let’s suppose that you’ve not yet confessed it to your wife. Let’s suppose you told a lie to your wife, and the Holy Spirit of God says, “You lied to your wife,” and you try to have fellowship with God. And, you know you don’t have fellowship with God. The searchlight of God’s holiness is telling you that you told a lie to your wife. Well, that is conviction—that’s Holy Spirit conviction—and it is a legitimate conviction. So, the Holy Spirit of God will convict you legitimately.

#### **B. The Holy Spirit Will Convict You Specifically**

Let me tell you what else He will do: He will convict you specifically. Now, when the devil accuses you, if the devil cannot accuse you of some sin that’s already been forgiven, well, then the devil will just accuse you generally. He’ll just say to you, “You’re no good. You’re unworthy. You have just a vile, sinful nature. God couldn’t love any body like you. There are a lot of people just like that. They’re under oppression of the devil. The devil has given these people a negative view of themselves, and they’re under satanic oppression.

But, the Holy Spirit of God does not convict you generally; He convicts you specifically. Your sin nature—that’s all under the blood of Christ—your Adamic nature. You have become a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). But, the devil doesn’t want you to understand that, so he just says, “You are no good.” He makes you feel bad, mostly all over. But, the Holy Spirit is like a skilled physician. He puts His finger on the sore spot, and He pushes. You say, “Oh, that hurt. That’s where the sin is.” And, the

Holy Spirit will call it by name. Don't ever try to deal with sin this way, and say, "O God, if I've sinned, forgive me." That's just a waste of breath. Say, "Lord, I told a lie. Forgive me." Or, "Lord, I was cruel. Forgive me." Or, "Lord, I was dishonest. Forgive me." Or, "Lord, I was watching something I should not have watched, and it was wrong. Forgive it." And, you see, you name it specifically, and that's where you get forgiven, because that's where the Holy Spirit of God will convict you.

Now, you don't have to go around just saying, "Oh, I must be guilty. Lord, forgive me for all of my sins, whatever they were. I don't know; I haven't got any idea. But, I just feel terrible." That's the devil making you feel terrible. The Holy Spirit will only convict you of sin that has not been confessed, and the Holy Spirit will tell you exactly what it is. He'll put a name on it. He'll put a face on it. He'll put a time on it. He'll put a date on it. And, that way, you can know that it is cleansed and forgiven.

### C. **The Holy Spirit Will Convict You Redemptively**

Now, here's a third way that the Holy Spirit convicts you: not only does He convict you legitimately, and not only does He convict you specifically, but the Holy Spirit of God will convict you redemptively. You see, the Holy Spirit of God convicts you so that you will confess and come to fellowship. God wants you to have fellowship with Him. When God deals with you as a son, He's not trying to get even with you; He is trying to restore you to fellowship. He hates it when the fellowship is broken, so He's trying to bring you back to fellowship. So, He will name the exact thing. He'll say, "This is what you've done; and now, come to me, and I will forgive you and cleanse you."

Now, He convicts you redemptively. The devil accuses you destructively. The Holy Spirit wants you to draw you to confession, and forgiveness, and fellowship. The devil wants to drive you to accusation and despair and away from God. So, just open up your heart to the Holy Spirit of God. That sin must be exposed to the light. That's all you need to do today. Just say, "Lord, here I am—here I am. If there is any un-confessed, un-forsaken, un-forgiven sin in my life, just turn the search light of Your holiness on to my life," and the Holy Spirit will legitimately, specifically, and redemptively say, "That's where the problem is." And then, what do you do with it? Well, first of all, it must be exposed to the light.

## II. **Your Sin Must Be Expressed to the Lord**

Secondly, it must be expressed to the Lord—it must be expressed to the Lord. Now, look, if you will, in verse 9. Look in verse 9, and look at it: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). Now, you must confess your sin.

Well, how do you confess your sin? Well, the word *confess* here is the word *homologeō*, and it means “to say the same thing.” A confession of sin is not just an admission of sin; it is an agreement with God about that sin. You say about that sin what God says about that sin. To confess that sin means to name it and nail it, to agree with God. When the Holy Spirit of God says, “There is the problem,” He puts His finger right on the sore spot. Then, you call that sin by name. You confess it. You say what the Holy Spirit has just said. That means to agree with the Holy Spirit, to confess—confess. Even in the English it means the same thing—like we say, “Fess up.” The word *con* means “with.” So, say the same. Agree with God. When the Holy Spirit of God legitimately, specifically, redemptively says, “There’s the problem in your life,” just simply agree with God and say, “That is right, God. There is the problem in my life, and I judge that sin.”

#### A. **Express It Immediately**

Now, how do you do it? Very carefully. You must do it immediately. The word *confess* is in the present tense. Don’t just save up all of your sins at the end of the day—or worse, at the end of the week. Say, “Now, Lord, I’m going to get right with you again.” Oh, no, if we confess, it’s present tense; it’s something that calls for immediate action.

When you get a speck of dust in your eye during the day, you don’t say, “I’ll get that out at the end of the night,” or, “I’ll get that out, maybe, in a week from now.” No, you say, “Pardon me, I’ve got something in my eye. I need to get that out.” It’s an irritant. That’s the way you do with your sin. I mean immediately—immediately. I do this all the time. I say, “Lord, that was wrong,” or, “Lord, my attitude was wrong,” or, “Lord, I did this, or I did that.” The Holy Spirit puts His finger on the sore spot, and immediately, just like that, I can say, “Lord, forgive me, and cleanse me.”

So many of us—we just ride a roller coaster. We’ll come to church, and we’ll be way down like this. The preacher will preach, and we’ll hear truth. We’ll get right with God, and we’ll confess our sin. And, we’re up here; and then, we go down way...we’re way down here. And, we go along for a long time; and then, we have another revival—we’re up here. Then, we’re down here. And, mostly these are much longer than these are. And, we’re just riding that roller coaster. Have you ever ridden it? A lot of folks just ride that roller coaster.

Now, let me tell you what the spiritual life is: the Spirit-filled life is not a life where you can never sin. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). But, here is what the Spirit-filled life is: it’s not riding this roller coaster like this. You get up here, and you get right with God. And, you’re going along, and you’re aware that some sin comes into your life. And, you start down, but immediately you



confess it, and you say, “O God, that’s wrong. I’m sorry. I agree with You.” And so, here’s your life. That’s the way it’s supposed to be—just like that. You just stay up here. You don’t get down here and ride that low part of that roller coaster for a long time. It is a life of confession of sin, agreeing with God. You do it immediately.

### **B. Express It Specifically**

And, I want to say, secondly, you do it, friend, specifically. Now, if the Holy Spirit of God convicts you specifically, then you confess specifically. You don’t say, “Lord, just forgive my *sin*.” He says, “Forgive my *sins*.” Look: *“If we confess our sins”* (1 John 1:9). Name it; call it by name. We sing that song:

Count your [many] blessings, name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord [has] done (Johnson Oatman, Jr.)

Count your many sins; name them one by one. It will surprise you what you’ve done! When you begin to say, “Lord, I did it,” but oh, what a relief there is—oh, what a relief there is—when you say, “God, I should not have watched that. I am sorry. It was wrong. I agree with You. I call it by sin. The Holy Spirit has convicted me it is wrong.”

### **C. Express It Confidently**

Do it immediately. Do it specifically. And friend, do it confidently. Listen: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins”* (1 John 1:9). Don’t you love that? *“He is faithful and just to forgive...our sins”* (1 John 1:9). If God did not cleanse you and forgive you, He’d be a liar and a crook. He’d be unfaithful and unjust. He is faithful and just. Why? For those sins Jesus died. And, you can be absolutely, wonderfully, totally, cleansed. And, “what God calls clean, let no man call unclean” (Acts 10:15; Acts 11:9). It will be gone, never, ever to be brought up against you anymore. *“He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9).

That’s a wonderful way to live, because, when we’re clean, what happens? When we’re clean, we have fellowship with God and fellowship with one another. And, there’s nothing like just being clean with God. *You know how you feel when you brush your teeth in the morning? How your mouth feels? You’ll feel that way all over—you feel that way all over—just to be clean and right with God. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us”—“to cleanse us.” Hallelujah!—“from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9).

## **Conclusion**

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Lord, thank You for Your Word. And, O Father, I pray today that many in this building just might know the joy—the joy—of that burden of sin lifted and gone. The devil loves to accuse, but Lord, You love to convict and to cleanse



and restore. Thank You for that.

And now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would you just let God love you a little bit right now? You're His child. If you've been out of fellowship with Him, He wants to call you back to Him, and He wants to do it right now. Thank Him for His mighty love for you. Oh, how He loves you and me!

# The Cleansing of Sin in the Life of a Christian

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 8, 1981

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 John 1:3–10

*“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us  
our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

1 JOHN 1:9

## Outline

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

And now, today, we’re going to talk about “The Cleansing of Sin in the Life of a Christian.” And, there’s a verse I’d like for you to find; it’s one of the sweetest verses in all of the Bible—and friend, if you know Jesus, I’ll guarantee you you’re going to need

and use this verse—1 John 1:9. And so, just turn to 1 John chapter 1—would you please?—verses 3 through 10. Are you ready? Okay, let's go.

*“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full”—you want to have full joy? Then, pay attention; listen. This... God’s telling you right here how to have fullness of joy. Who doesn’t want to be happy? Who doesn’t want to have fullness of joy? All right, then pay attention—“these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him”—that is, “in God”—“is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son”—that is, “the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son”—“cleanseth us from all sin”—look at that word cleanseth. It means “continue to...continues to cleanse,” “continually cleanses us from all sin”—“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:3–10).*

#### **A. Can a Child of God Sin?**

I want to ask you a question: Can a child of God sin? If you believe so, nod your head. Now, that was more than an agreement; it was a testimony, wasn't it? You know just as surely as you have been saved that a child of God can sin. Now, there are some people who teach that the child of God cannot sin, but such teaching is completely foreign to the Bible. The child of God can sin. And, as you study the Bible, you'll find some of the greatest saints in the Bible have their sins recorded.

We read in the Bible where Peter played the hypocrite after he had been keeping company with the Jewish Christians. And, there was nothing wrong with Peter keeping company with the Jewish Christians, but when some of the brethren came down, Peter beat it out the back alley and made out like he'd not been doing that. And Peter, the Bible says, dissembled, which means literally that he played the hypocrite (Galatians 2:13). We read also in the Bible how Paul went up to Jerusalem—the great Apostle Paul went up to Jerusalem—against the clear leading of the Holy Spirit. And, I suppose one of the grandest characters in all of the Old Testament was a man named Noah. And yet, we read about how Noah got drunk and disgraced himself—Noah, this wonderful man. How our hearts are broken when we read about the sin of Noah! Or Abraham, the father of the faithful—and yet, when you read the story of Abraham, you find where Abraham lied about Sarah, his wife. And, rather than calling her his wife, because of his lack of faith at a particular time, he called her his sister (Genesis 20:2). And, this was a way he

had of getting himself out of a tight spot that he was in.

Now, Christians can sin. The Bible teaches it. We have observed it, and we know it from personal experience. Can a Christian sin? Yes.

### **B. Can a Christian Lose His Salvation If He Sins?**

Question number two: Can a Christian lose his salvation if he sins? Absolutely not—absolutely not. Now, there are some people who do believe that Christians can sin, but, correspondingly, they believe that if a Christian sins, he will lose his salvation. Well, I want to ask you a question: If that is true—if you could lose your salvation when you sin—how much sin would it take for you to lose your salvation? Do you think that God would let a little sin go by, but that a lot of sin would cause you to lose your salvation? Friend, if you think that God would let a little sin go by, you don't understand God. If God were to mark that sin up against you, one half of one small sin would damn you forever, see? These people who think that if they sin, they lose their salvation, well, then they'd get lost every day—every day. You see, when you understand what the Bible says—that sin is... For example, the Bible says, *"The thought of foolishness is sin"* (Proverbs 24:9). The Bible says, *"Whatsoever is not of faith [to him it] is sin"* (Romans 14:23). The Bible says, *"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin"* (James 4:17).

Most of us probably sin far more than we even realize that we sin. And, if sin caused you to lose your salvation, you'd be lost every day and have to get saved anew and afresh. Well, no, sin doesn't cause you to lose your salvation. If I thought that sin caused me to lose my salvation, I'd be very discouraged. I'll tell why: I wouldn't trust the best 15 minutes I ever lived to get me to heaven if that's what I'm depending on, see? Okay. Can a child of God sin? Yes. Could sin cause him to lose his salvation? No. We've already dealt with that, so I'm not even going to give you all the scripture on that, okay? We dealt with that when we talked about the security of the believer.

### **C. Does It Make a Difference Whether a Child of God Sins?**

All right, third question: If the child of God can sin, and if sin doesn't cause him to lose his salvation, does it make any difference, therefore, whether a child of God sins or not? Absolutely yes. *If you're bound to sin, you are bound to suffer.* And, sin causes suffering and great loss.

And, we're going to show you again what sin does to the Christian. Now, we already dealt with it last week, but I just...I'm going to reinforce it this week from the New Testament. But, I'm going to spend more time today talking about the cleansing of sin in the life of a Christian. So, I want us to think... If you're making an outline today, the point number one is going to be the deceitfulness of sin in the Christian. Point number two is going to be the destructiveness of sin in the Christian. Point number three is

going to be the disclosure of sin in the Christian. And, point number four—dealing with sin in the life of a Christian.

## **I. The Deceitfulness of Sin in the Life of a Christian**

Now, let's think for just a moment about the deceitfulness of sin in the life of a Christian. There are very few things that are more deceitful, more deceiving, than sin in the life of a Christian. I want you to see, as we look here in 1 John chapter 1—notice verse 6: *"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth"* (1 John 1:6). Just underscore that phrase—"if we say." Now, skip down, if you will, to verse 8: *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves"* (1 John 1:8)—the same phrase. Now, skip down to verse 10: *"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and [the truth] is not in us"* (1 John 1:10). Three times we read this statement: "If we say," "if we say," "if we say..." And, three times what we say is connected with lying and deceitfulness. So, you can see why I'm calling this point the deceitfulness of sin in the Christian.

Let me tell you what happens when a Christian lets sin get into his life.

### **A. Lying to Others**

If he's not careful, the first thing he'll do is lie to others. Look in verse 6: *"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth"* (1 John 1:6). The first thing that we do when we get out of fellowship with God—we still come to church; we still paste a smile on our face; we still carry a Bible; we still nod and say, "Amen," when the choir sings, when the preacher preaches. And, we go through a little show, and we want everybody to think we're in fellowship with God. In our hearts we know we're not, but we're sitting there in church—and oh, we look so holy, and we look so pious, you know, and so forth. I'm looking out at you right now, and oh my, how holy you all look, you know. You're sitting here this morning just radiant, but some of you are playing a game—some are playing a game. In your heart you don't have fellowship with God. Look at it again: *"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth"* (1 John 1:6). And so, you're just kind of living a lie. That's the first step: lying to others.

### **B. Lying to Yourself**

Now, let me tell you what that leads to: it leads to lying to yourself. Look in verse 8: *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"* (1 John 1:8). Now, after a while, we stop deceiving others, and we start deceiving ourselves. Maybe we continue to deceive others, and we start to deceive ourselves. You know, you can act a certain way long enough until you think that's the way you're supposed to act. There are some people who make peace with their sin, and they go through just a

little bit of acting or roleplaying until suddenly they just settle down with it; and they don't call it sin any more. They say, "Well, this is normal. That's the way I'm supposed to be," and they lie to themselves. They start...they get into a game of self-deception.

### C. Lying to God

All right. But now, let's see where it goes to. First of all, we start lying to others; in other words, we start acting the way we're not. And then, secondly, we start believing the way we're acting. And thirdly, it ends up lying to God. We lie to others. Then we lie to ourselves. We end up lying to God. Look, if you will, in verse 10: *"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us"* (1 John 1:10). Now, what we do—actually, we think that we can take issue with God. And, God says that we've sinned, but we say, "Oh no, God. You're wrong. I haven't really sinned." You're not telling the truth. Now, of course, it's those of us who are not telling the truth. If we say that we've not sinned, we are really lying to God.

Now, how do we—how do we—get around this? Well, we just take sin, and we put new labels on it. Rather than calling it a sin, we call it a "mistake." You know, rather than calling it a sin, we call it an "error in judgment." Or, rather than calling it a sin, we just call it a "bad temper." Or, we call it a "glandular malfunction." Or, we just say it was the result of environment, you see. We don't want to really admit our sinfulness. You know, it's amazing what modern society has done to explain away sin. Today, men are no longer evil; they're "ill." They're no longer sinful; they're "sick." They're no longer wicked; they're "underprivileged." And really, it's not our fault any more what we do because we're like a computer that's been programmed wrong. And, if we smack our little sister in the mouth, it's because our mother wouldn't let us push our mush off the highchair when we were a kid, you know, and somehow our psyche got warped. You'd be surprised how this philosophy has gone through life.

I tell you, they used to have something on television and on the radio—used to irk me every time I would hear it. It was a little statement that went like this: "Take your keys out of your car, and don't help a good boy to go wrong...or don't cause a good boy to go wrong." You ever hear that? "Take your keys out of your car; don't cause a good boy to go wrong." Friend, you take your keys out of your car so some punk won't steal it, you hear? I mean, you see, the thought is that if you leave your keys in your car, you'll cause him to steal. Now, my goodness, if your car gets stolen, they ought to put you in jail. Think what you did to that kid. I mean, that's the philosophy, see? Dear friend, a child, or a boy, or a man is not a thief because he steals; he steals because he's a thief. People are not liars because they tell lies; they tell lies because they're liars.

But, we have a cute little way of telling lies about our own sin. First of all, we start saying, "Well, you know..." We just start living it. We come to church, and we look like we're in fellowship. We look so holy, and we sing so well, and so forth. Inside we know

we're not right with God. Then, after a while, we start believing we're all right. And then, after a while, we take issue with God. *"If we say [we've] not sinned, we make him a liar, and his [truth] is not in us"* (1 John 1:10). Oh, the deceitfulness of sin in the life of a Christian! I wonder if there are not some in this class this morning who are playing the game—playing the game. You'll never have joy in your Christian life until you stop playing that game and telling those lies: "If we say," "if we say," "if we say..."

## **II. The Destructiveness of Sin in the Life of a Christian**

Secondly, I want you to see not only the deceitfulness of sin in the life of a Christian, but I want you to see the destructiveness of sin in the life of a Christian. Look at verse 4: *"these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full"* (1 John 1:4). That is, no one can have joy as a Christian when there is the deceitfulness of sin in his heart and in his life. Sin always causes a loss of joy.

If you were here last week, you remember we studied together Psalm 51, where David prayed, *"[LORD,] restore unto me the joy of thy salvation"* (Psalm 51:12). He did not pray, "Lord, restore unto me Thy salvation." He never lost his salvation; he lost the joy of his salvation. Now, I want you to learn this: the most miserable man on earth is not an unsaved man. There are a lot of unsaved people in the city of Memphis, Tennessee, who are having a big time. They're living it up, and they almost feel sorry for you today because you're in church. I mean, they're living high, wide, and handsome. They're boozing it up, running around, kicking up their heels, laughing and joking. And, don't tell these people they're not having a good time, 'cause they won't believe you; they know they are.

You say, "Brother Rogers, you ought not to talk that way." Well, the Bible talks that way. The Bible speaks of *"the pleasures of sin"* (Hebrews 11:25). You see, the devil's too smart to go fishing without any bait on his hook. *"The pleasures of sin"* (Hebrews 11:25), the Bible mentions. But, the Bible says that *"the pleasures of sin [are only] for a season"* (Hebrews 11:25) and the *"bread of deceit is sweet...but [afterward a man's] mouth shall be filled with gravel"* (Proverbs 20:17). But, don't make the mistake of saying that the happiest people in town are the Christians and the unhappiest people in town are the unsaved. I want to tell you, dear friend, that the most miserable man in town is not a lost man; the most miserable man in town is a saved man out of fellowship with God. Mark it down: a Christian out of fellowship with God is absolutely miserable—more miserable than the lost man who is enjoying the pleasures of sin. A lost man can enjoy the pleasures of sin without the Holy Spirit in him tearing him up, but the unsaved man cannot. You see, there are some of you...have just enough salvation to make you miserable in the world and just enough of the world to make you miserable in your salvation, and you're unhappy wherever you go.



Now, now, John here says, *“These things [have I written] unto you, that your joy may be full”*—“that you might have fullness of joy” (1 John 3:4). Sin takes away your joy. Now, how does it do it? Well, the Bible says in Proverbs chapter 28 and verse 13: *“[Whoso] covereth his [sin] shall not prosper”*—now, what that means is if you fail to confess your sins, nothing will work out right. As a Christian, you’re engineered that way; God’s made you that way. The unsaved person can just sail along, but not the Christian—*“He that covereth his [sin] shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy”* (Proverbs 28:13). Now, when it says, “You will not prosper,” that just simply means nothing is going to work out right until you stop covering your sin—until you stop saying, “If we say, if we say, if we say...” or stop saying what you say when you say what John meant when he said, “If we say...”

All right. Now, let me tell you some things that will not work out right. Let me tell you why you can’t have any joy.

#### A. **Loss of Health**

First of all, there’s going to be the loss of health. We mentioned this last week. Remember the scripture in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 30? Paul was talking to those in the church at Corinth, and he said—because of their carnality, and because of their schism, and because of their irreverence, and because of their immorality—he said, *“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and [some] sleep”* (1 Corinthians 11:30). For what cause? Because of their sin. Many Christians were sick. Not all Christians are sick because of their personal sins. Some of God’s choicest of saints have suffered—and they do. But, it would surprise us if we knew how much of our physical sickness is directly related to our spiritual meanness, and we talked about that last week; I’m not going to deal with that in great depth.

#### B. **Loss of Prayer Power**

But, not only is there the loss of health; there’s also the loss of prayer power. Did you know, friend, the time will come when for God to answer your prayer will mean more to you than anything else on the face of this earth? And yet, many of you will pray, and your prayers will get no higher than the light bulb. And, you say, “Prayer has failed.” No, prayer hasn’t failed. *If I go into my house, and I throw the light switch, and the lights don’t come on, I don’t say, “Electricity is a failure.” I may say, “There’s a blown fuse,” or I may say, “We didn’t pay the bill,” or, “The bulb is burned out.” But, I wouldn’t say, “Electricity has failed.”* When you pray and your prayers are not answered, and that prayer is in the will of God, it does not mean that prayer has failed. But, it means there’s trouble somewhere, and most frequently that trouble is sin in the Christian’s life. The Bible says in Psalm 66 and verse 18: *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me”*—*“the Lord will not”* (Psalm 66:18). You see, dear friend, un-confessed sin in

our lives causes our prayers not to be heard. This is the destructiveness of sin in the life of a Christian.

### C. **Loss of Influence**

Not only may I lose my health; I'll lose the answer to my prayers. And, not only that—I may lose my influence and my ability and my power to bring others to Jesus Christ. Did you know that if I went out and got drunk, God would chastise me for that? I would not go to hell, but I believe some other people would go to hell if I went out and got drunk, because of what I did. People watch me, but they watch you. And, God demands as much holiness out of you as He does out of me. It took as much of the blood of Jesus to save you as it did me. Amen. See? The Bible says, "None of us live unto ourselves, and none of us die unto ourselves" (Romans 14:7). So many people say, "Well, will this hurt me?" That's not the only question. Will it hurt others? Will it cause someone else to stumble?

I read in the Bible, for example, about Lot. And Lot—when we're going...when we're preaching through Genesis, we'll come to this—but Lot was a just man, the Bible says in the New Testament (2 Peter 2:7). That means he'd been saved; he's been born again. But, Lot moved into the city of Sodom and actually became one of the civic leaders in Sodom. And, he became so much like the people of Sodom (although he was saved) that when God came to Lot and said, "Lot, you get out of this city because I'm going to destroy it with fire and brimstone," Lot turned to the boys that his daughters had married and said, "Boys, let's leave. God's going to destroy this place." And, the Bible says that they laughed and sneered at him; they laughed him to scorn (Genesis 19:14).

### D. **Loss of Reward in Heaven**

Not only may you lose your influence; you'll lose reward in heaven by your sin. Did you know that God is keeping a record of your life? And, you're not saved by good works, but you're rewarded according to your works. And, did you know that when you sin, you lose reward in heaven? Now, we'll talk about this more fully in a later lesson, but we're in 2 John. In 2 John verse 8, the Bible says, "*Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward*" (1 John 1:8). Many are not going to receive a full reward. Jesus said, "*Lay up for yourselves [treasure] in heaven*" (Matthew 6:20). That verse doesn't make sense unless some are going to have more than others, you see. And, while sin may not cost you your salvation, it will cost a loss of reward in heaven. You say, "Well, that doesn't make any difference to me—just so long as I get there." Well, I'm going to teach a lesson later on that I think will nullify that theory, but I don't have time to deal with that right now. There's going to be a loss of reward in heaven.

## E. Loss of Physical Life

Let me tell you something else that you may lose by your sin: even though you do not lose your salvation, there may be a loss of your very physical life. You're in 1 John 1. Turn to 1 John 5—1 John 5—and look, if you will, in verse 16: *“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death”*—that is, you intercede for a man if he hasn't sinned unto death. But then, he says—*“There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it”* (1 John 5:16). That is, a brother or a sister in a church may cross a deadline where even intercession cannot keep him from dying prematurely. Did you know that death can—that death can—come to a Christian who sins when death ordinarily would not come to him? Did you know that many Christians die prematurely when they should not die? Go back to that verse in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 30: *“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and [some] sleep”* (1 Corinthians 11:30). You know what that word *sleep* means? That's the Bible word for death in a Christian. Does... It doesn't... That's not the Bible word for death for the unsaved but death for the Christian. *“[Some] sleep”* (1 Corinthians 11:30)—that is, they died prematurely.

You read in the Bible where Moses—and Moses was a man of God; Moses is in heaven. Moses appeared with the Lord Jesus Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration—but you read in the Bible where Moses disobeyed God, and he died prematurely. He committed the sin unto death. If you're a Bible scholar, you remember the episode. God said to Moses—when the people were murmuring and they had no water out in the wilderness—God said to Moses, “Moses, you take that rod that I've given you, and you strike that rock”—excuse me, “you”—“yes, you strike the rock. And, out of that rock will come water, and the people may drink” (Exodus 17:6). And, that's what happened. Later, they had given out of water. This time, God said to Moses, “Moses, speak to the rock, and the rock will give water” (Numbers 20:8). He was not told to strike the rock again.

Incidentally, there's a deep spiritual lesson there, because that rock was an illustration of who? Jesus. The Bible tells us in the New Testament, *“That Rock was Christ”* (1 Corinthians 10:4). That is, symbolically, it was Christ. When Moses struck that rock the first time, do you know what that symbolized? Jesus, *“smitten of God, and afflicted”* (Isaiah 53:4). And, from His wounded side comes the water of life. It's a beautiful Old Testament picture of Jesus. But, the next time they needed water Moses was not told to strike the rock; he was told to speak to the rock and water would come. Do you see the symbolism? Jesus died once—smitten once, never to be smitten again. For when He died on the cross, He said, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30). And, all we need we find in Calvary. No longer need that rock be smitten. We just speak to the rock, see? Just speak—just speak. And, from His riven side comes those refreshing waters of the

soul that we have in the finished work of Calvary.

But, what did Moses do? Moses got so perturbed and exacerbated with those people, he took the rod, and he smote the rock. He should have known better. And, because he did not sanctify God in the eyes of the people, God said to Moses, “You’re not going to cross this Jordan. You’re not going to enter into My Promised Land. Come with Me, Moses, up here on the mountaintop” (Numbers 20:12). And, Moses went up on the mountaintop on Mount Nebo, and he saw the Promised Land afar off. But, he died without entering in. Nobody knows his burial place because God performed his funeral. But, the Bible says this about Moses when he died: the Bible says, “*His eye was not [dimmed], [neither was] his [strength] abated*” (Deuteronomy 34:7). That is, he died in the prime of health. There was no reason for Moses to die except that he sinned as a Christian, as a child of God. He sinned against God. He committed a sin unto death, and he died prematurely.

In the fifth chapter of 1 Corinthians there’s a story of a man. This man was living in sexual immorality in the church. He had been warned. He had been prayed over and pled with, but he would not repent. And, do you know what Paul said there? Paul said, “*Deliver such [a] one [to] Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*” (1 Corinthians 5:5). Notice his body was destroyed; his spirit was saved. He was a Christian; he was a brother. But, he got into flagrant sin, and rather than confessing that sin and dealing with that sin, he was obstinate. He committed a sin unto death, and he was delivered “*[to] Satan for the destruction of the flesh*” (1 Corinthians 5:5). When Satan started working on him, later on he did repent, and he did not have to die.

But, let me tell you another person who almost did die and didn’t die: his name was Balaam. Do you remember reading about Balaam back there in the Book of Numbers, chapter 22? God said to Balaam... Well, Balaam wanted to do a certain thing, and God didn’t want him to do it. And, he asked God if he could do it, and God said no. And, he kept on asking, and then God said, “All right, you can do it.” Now, it seems like God wanted him to do it, but God didn’t want him to do it. God only allowed him to do it. You have to be careful, friend, when you’re praying with God.

You know, I heard about a man one day. He was just sort of an itinerant or vagabond, and he just rambled all over the country. And, someone said, “Well, how do you decide where you’re going to go?” He said, “I just follow a trail.” He said, “Well, what do you do when you get to the forks in the road?” “Well,” he said, “I just have a stick.” He said, “I throw it up in the air, and whichever way it lands—that way I go.” He said, “Now, sometimes I have to throw it up as many as six times to make it land right.” Now, that’s the way some people are with God. You know, they say, “God, can I do this?” “No.” They come back: “God, can I do this?” “No.” “God, can I do this?” “No, you can’t.”

“God, can I do this?” “All right, do it.” It doesn’t mean God wants you to; it means God’s going to let you have your way, and you’re going to come into the consequences of it because you would not listen to God the first time.

That’s what Balaam did. God said, “Balaam, can I do this?” Or, or, Balaam said, “God, can I do this?” “No.” “Can I do this?” “No.” Finally, Balaam thinks that God is giving him permission, and it’s really Balaam’s own decision. And, Balaam was a prophet; he was a man of God. And, some of the marvelous prophecies about Jesus in all of the Bible came from the mouth of Balaam. But, Balaam is riding along on his donkey, and the donkey sees something that Balaam couldn’t see. What the donkey saw was the angel of Jehovah with a drawn sword standing before Balaam. And, when the donkey saw this drawn sword, it just...it scared him so much that he turned aside to get out of the way. And, he was in a narrow place, and he crushed Balaam’s foot up against a wall. Well, it made Balaam angry, and he beat the donkey and said, “Now, let’s go.” The donkey started again. He saw the angel of the Lord, and the donkey went out in the field. He beat him again. Third time—he said, “Let’s go,” and the donkey just fell down and wouldn’t move. Balaam was so angry. He beat that poor animal the third time, and the donkey spoke. A miracle took place. The donkey said, “Now, why have you beaten me these three times? Haven’t I been your faithful beast?” Somebody said they knew what language that donkey used. It was Hebraic. Anyway, he spoke to old Balaam. And, at that moment, Balaam’s eyes were opened, and Balaam saw what the donkey saw. And, what Balaam saw was the angel of the Lord with a drawn sword (Numbers 22:11–34). And, you can turn to Numbers chapter 32 and find it for yourself later—chapter 22, verse 32 (Numbers 22:32). But, here’s what the angel of the Lord said to Balaam: the angel of the Lord said to Balaam, “If you had come any further, I would surely have slain you” (Numbers 22:33). There’s only so far God will let you go. Now, Balaam was a man of God; he was a prophet. But, the angel of the Lord said, “Had you gone any further, I surely would have slain you” (Numbers 22:33).

I wonder if there are some of you who are not about two steps away from that. And, everybody will say, “Wasn’t it awful—that automobile accident? Wasn’t it awful—that heart attack? Wasn’t it strange—that sudden death?” *“There is a sin unto death”* (1 John 5:16). You say, “Brother Rogers, are you trying to scare me?” You bet your booties. *“[There’s] a sin unto death”—“[there’s] a sin unto death”* (1 John 5:16). That’s what the Bible says. You can die prematurely. *“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and [some] sleep”* (1 Corinthians 11:30). You see, God will not let you, if you’re a real Christian, just continually disgrace Him. *You take your little boy to a birthday party. He starts pulling girls’ pigtailed or sticking his fist in the cake and just using bad language. And, you speak to him, and that doesn’t help him. And then you spank him, and that doesn’t help him. Then, what’s the third thing you do? You say, “Come on, let’s go*

home.” Right? “You’re not going to stay here and disgrace me like that.” You just bring him on home. That’s what God does to some of His children—they just come on home. “Let’s go home early. The party’s over. That’s it. Come on home. I spoke; you wouldn’t listen. I spanked you; you wouldn’t listen. Let’s go home.”

### **III. The Disclosure of Sin in the Life of a Christian**

Now, the Holy Spirit is going to convict you of sin. And, incidentally, let me say that as a Christian, you need to learn the difference between the accusation of the devil and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, because many Christians do not know the difference. The devil accuses you of sin; the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin. Now, what is the difference? Well, let’s see how the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin.

#### **A. The Holy Spirit Convicts Legitimately**

First of all, the Holy Spirit, when He convicts you of sin, is going to convict you legitimately. Now, what do I mean by that? The Holy Spirit will never convict you of sin that has already been forgiven. The devil will accuse you of sin that has already been forgiven. You see, when God forgives you, the Bible says He remembers our sins against us no more: *“I will remember their [sins] no more”* (Jeremiah 31:34). But, the devil remembers those sins, and the devil reminds us about those sins that God has forgiven. But, the Holy Spirit will never convict you about a sin that God has already forgiven. Satan loves for people to dwell on past sins, sins that have already been forgiven. Some people have done terrible, horrible things in their past, and they’ve brought it to the Lord; and God has forgiven them and cleansed them. Friend, what God has buried let no man dig up. *“God hath removed our sins from us”—“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us”* (Psalm 103:12). God says, *“I will cast their sins behind my back”* (Isaiah 38:17). *“I will bury them in the depths of the sea”* (Micah 7:19). *“Their iniquities will I remember no more”* (Hebrews 8:12). And so, when the Holy Spirit convicts you, it is not of some sin that has already been dealt with; He will only convict you legitimately.

#### **B. The Holy Spirit Convicts Specifically**

Secondly, the Holy Spirit will only convict you specifically. When the Holy Spirit speaks to you about a sin as a Christian, He doesn’t speak to you about your sin nature. That’s already been dealt with by Calvary. But now, He deals with you about the lie you told. Or now, He deals with you about when you lost your temper, or that matter of pride. He names it; He calls it by name. That is a conviction. The Holy Spirit will say, “You cheated on your income tax.” Or, the Holy Spirit will say, “You told a lie,” or the Holy Spirit will say, “You were unkind to that person.” He will put His finger right on the sore spot and push. You know, this kind of—this kind of—praying: “Lord, if I’ve committed



any sin, forgive me”—friend, that won’t get it. That’s not it. The Bible says, *“If we confess our sins...”* (1 John 1:9)—not *sin*, “sins.” *Too many of us want to sin retail and confess wholesale.* No, no. We are to name them one by one as the Holy Spirit convicts us.

Now, the devil will just accuse you vaguely. He’ll make you feel bad mostly all over, and you don’t even know what it is you’ve done. You just kind of... If he’s not convicting you about some...or accusing you about some sin that’s already been confessed, he’ll just kind of make you feel guilty in general. That’s a guilt trip the devil is putting on you, not the Holy Spirit. If you’re a Christian—and you won’t have to guess about it—the Holy Spirit will just say, “You did this,” or, “You did that.”

### C. The Holy Spirit Convicts Redemptively

But now, thirdly, not only will He convict you specifically and legitimately; He will also convict you redemptively. Now, what I mean by that is that the devil will accuse you to make you feel bad, to nullify you, and lead you into despair and despondency. That’s accusation. The Holy Spirit will convict you legitimately, specifically to lead you to confession, and forgiveness, and joy, and happiness. Now, you need to learn the difference between accusation and conviction. You see, the Holy Spirit is God’s light, and He convicts you specifically. And, He says, “This you did. This you did. This you failed to do. This you failed to do.” And, you just bring those things to the Lord, and God will cleanse you. Now, conviction draws you to Christ; accusation drives you from Christ.

## IV. The Dealing with Sin in the Life of a Christian

Now, finally, and in the last two or three minutes, let’s see about the dealing with sin in the life of a Christian. And, I have not divided my time wisely, but look in verse 8—here’s how we deal with sin in the life of a Christian: *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our [sin], he is faithful and just to forgive us our [sin], and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:8–9).

Now, here is the dealing with sin in the life of a Christian. We are to confess our sin—now, not admit our sin. Learn the difference between an admission and a confession. In a court of law, an admission and confession may be the same thing, but not in the Bible and not in dealing with God. It is one thing to admit your sin, but the Greek word *confess* means “to agree with”—“to agree with.” That is, when you confess your sin, what you’re literally doing is agreeing with God concerning your sin. You judge that sin as God has judged it. You say about it what God says about it. You join God and takes sides against that sin. Until you’ve done that, you’ve not confessed it. It’s not enough to say, “Oh yes, I’ve sinned.” That’s not a confession. A confession is when you



say, “God, I agree with You—that is wrong. I see it from Your viewpoint. I confess it.” *Homologeō* is the Greek word—“to say the same as.” All right, now look, we are to confess our sin.

#### A. **We Are to Confess Sin Continually**

How are we to do it? We are to do it continually. This word *confess* is in the present tense. That means it is to be a continual habit. It is not something we just do and forget it. We live day by day. The minute we’re aware of any sin in our lives, we confess that sin.

#### B. **We Are to Confess Sin Completely**

But, not only are we to do it continually; we are to do it completely. *“If we confess our sins...”* (1 John 1:9). Don’t sin retail and confess wholesale.

#### C. **We Are to Confess Sin Confidently**

All right, number three: not only are we to do it continually, not only are we to do it completely; we are to do it confidently—confidently. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins”* (1 John 1:9). Hallelujah! You don’t have to beg Him; you don’t have to plead. Jesus died for you, and you can know that you can know that you can know that *“he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us”*—now, listen to this next big little word—*“from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). Don’t let the devil lay a guilt trip on you and say, “Well, there are some things He just can’t cleanse.” Don’t buy that. *“All unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). David said, *“Wash me, and [I’ll] be whiter than snow”* (Psalm 51:7).

Learn to live by confession. Bill Bright calls it “spiritual breathing”: out goes the bad air; we confess our sins—in comes the good air, the fullness of God’s Spirit. And, we just live by spiritual breathing just as we live physically by breathing.

## **Conclusion**

Father, thank you for our lesson this morning. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

# A Cleansed Life

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: September 14, 1997**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 1:3–10T 2:1–2**

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## Introduction

First John chapter 1—be finding it, if you will, please. And, while you're finding it, let me ask you a question: After you're saved, is it possible for a Christian to sin? Don't answer that, because you already know the answer. You know it theologically, and you know experientially—that it is possible for a child of God to sin. But, there's no possible way that a child of God can sin and enjoy that sin, because the Lord—if he's truly saved—will chasten him. And so, it is important that we live moment by moment with a cleansed life. And, I want to talk to you, before we take the Lord's Supper, about what it means to have your life cleansed. You know, when a child of God falls into sin, he ought to have a desire for a very quick recovery.

The first little church I ever pastored was down on the edge of the Everglades down in Florida, in a sugar mill town. The little town was called Fellsmere. There were about 500 people in that little town, and four churches. I pastored the First Baptist Church, the

last Baptist, and the only Baptist, church in that town, and it was a wonderful experience. And, the people out there had various occupations. There was the sugar mill, the orange groves, some cattle, and then right up high among the industries was poaching alligators and gigging frogs. And, I had a deacon there who was named Neil Shearer, and Neil was as wiry little guy—about, 5 feet, 7 inches tall, and very muscular. And, he was very backwoods, and that would be putting it kindly. And Neil, before he came to Jesus, was a poacher of alligators.

He was also a frogger, and he had one of these airboats where you would go across the Sawgrass. And, one of those airboats with an airplane engine mounted on it could go really, actually, on wet grass—sometimes up over the levies and back down the other side. Those things would fly through the Everglades. And, these men would sit up there on their high chair with a big spotlight, and watch the terrain, and shine in the frogs' eyes, and gig them.

Also, they would see deer and alligators. And, Neil said that when they would see an alligator, they never would shoot the alligator because the game warden would hear the gunshot. So, they kept a big bopping hammer under the seat. And, they would put the alligator's eyes in their headlights, idle the motor, come up very close to the alligator, then take that big hammer, lean down, and hit the alligator between the eyes, stun him, pull him in the boat, cut his throat. And, Neil said, "Upon a time, I saw what I believe was the biggest alligator I'd ever seen." And, he said, "I brought my boat right up alongside of him, and got the hammer, and knew that I was going to have to hit him very hard." And, he said, "I picked up the hammer and swung with all of my might, but," he said, "I missed his head completely. And, when I did, the momentum of that hammer went behind me and flipped me out of the seat." He said, "I landed astraddle that alligator." And then, I'll never forget what he told me: he said, "Pastor, I got back in the boat without getting wet!" Now folks, I want to have that kind of a relationship to sin: you know, I want to fear sin worse than I would an alligator, and I want to have a desire for a quick, quick recovery.

So, I want to talk to you tonight about how to live a cleansed life and if you do slip and fall, how to get back in the boat before that alligator gets you. Now look, if you will, here in 1 John chapter 1. I'm going to begin reading in verse 4: *"these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full"* (1 John 1:4). Now, by the way, I want to tell you again, *God doesn't fix you up where you cannot sin anymore; He just fixes you where you cannot sin and enjoy it anymore.* So, He's talking now about having fullness of joy. And, if your joy is lacking, there's only one thing that can take your joy from you—not two, not three, not four, but one—and it is sin. That's the only thing can take your joy from you. A child may break your heart, and grieve you, and cause you sorrow, but still

inside is the joy of the Lord. And, the joy of the Lord is not there to take away the pain; the joy of the Lord is there to help you to bear it. And, many of us have pain, and we need the joy of the Lord. There's only one thing can take the joy of the Lord from your heart, and that is sin. So, He's writing that you might have fullness of joy.

So, if you want to have *"joy unspeakable and full of glory"* (1 Peter 1:8), listen. Do you want to have that fullness of joy? *"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say...we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us"*—that's in present tense ("it continues to cleanse us")—*"from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say...we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us"* (1 John 1:4–10). Now, continue to read right on through the first two verses of chapter 2: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate"—that means "a lawyer"—"with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation"—that word is a double-jointed word, which means "He is the *satisfaction*, the *full payment*"—"for our sins: and not for ours only, but [for] also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1–2).

Now, you have two vital relationships with God: you have the relationship of sonship and fellowship.

### A. Sonship

Sonship is established by birth, and once you're born into the family of God, you can never be unborn. I was born a Rogers. That is a settled fact. No matter how my father and I got along, there's nothing that can undo the fact that I was born into the Rogers family. I have the Rogers genes and chromosomes in me. That is an established fact. No matter what the fellowship between my father and I may be, that relationship is settled. So, sonship is a matter of life or death. *"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son...hath [no] life"* (1 John 5:12)—*"but the wrath of God abideth on him"* (John 3:36). Now, that's one thing—to have sonship.

### B. Fellowship

But, fellowship is another thing. Sonship is established by birth, and fellowship is established by life. Now, sonship is a matter of life or death; fellowship is a matter of light or darkness. You cannot lose sonship; you can lose fellowship. And, when you lose fellowship, you lose joy. So, we're going to see now how we can keep that fellowship right, because the Bible says that in verse 3: *"That which we have seen and heard*

*declare we unto you, that ye...may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).*

## **I. The Conviction of Sin**

Three things before we have the Lord’s Supper. First of all, I want you to think about the conviction of sin in the life of a Christian. Now, God the Holy Spirit, if you sin, will convict you of sin. As a matter of fact, the Holy Spirit convicted me of sin just before I came in this service. You say, “What did you do, Pastor?” I’m not going to tell you. I told Him. And, you may not even think what I confessed was a sin, but the Holy Spirit said it was a sin. I got on my knees, and it was so wonderful just to say, “Lord, I did thus-and-such,” and to be cleansed.

### **A. The Evolution of Unforgiven Sin**

Now, the Holy Spirit of God will convict you of sin. Let me show you what He needs to convict us of. And look, if you will, in verse 6—verse 6 begins with this statement: *“If we say”* (1 John 1:6). Do you see that? And then, look in verse 8—it begins with this statement: *“If we say”* (1 John 1:8). Then, look in verse 10—it begins with this statement: *“If we say”* (1 John 1:10). Now, it’s one thing to talk; it is another thing to walk the walk.

#### **1. You Lie to Others**

Now, you just have an idea that the Apostle John had been in a testimony meeting in a Baptist church and listened to people say things that he knew were not true. And, first of all, he talks about lying to others. Verse 6: *“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth”* (1 John 1:6). Now, you know, you can come to a church like this and say, “Amen,” carry a Bible, and pat your foot to the music, laugh and joke, and make everybody think that you’re right with God, and not be right with God. Down in your heart, you know you’re not right with God, but you’re just simply lying to others. What a miserable life that is!

#### **2. You Lie to Yourself**

Now, what happens when you do that? When you begin to lie to others and stonewall the Holy Spirit, who is convicting you of sin, do you know what the second step is? You begin to lie to yourself. Look, if you will, in verse 8: *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”* (1 John 1:8). Now, when you live a life of a backslidden Christian long enough, do you know what you’ll do? You’ll begin to tell yourself, “Oh, it’s all right. That really was not that bad. I’m really all right.” And so, then, you get to believing your own lies.

### **3. You Lie to God**

And then, you know what you do? After you lie to others and lie to yourself, you end up lying to God. Look, if you will, in verse 10: *“If we say...we have not sinned, we make him a liar”* (1 John 1:10), because, you see, the Holy Spirit of God says it is sin; you say it’s not sin, so, therefore, God is lying when God is convicting you of sin. Now, that’s a terrible thing. It’s a bad thing to lie to others; it’s another—it’s worse—to lie to yourself. But, what a horrible thing it is to lie to God! We begin to rationalize sin. We call it a “mistake.” We call it “an error in judgment.” We call it “legitimate resentment.” But friend, I want to tell you that Jesus did not die for mistakes, errors in judgment; He died for sin. And so, the Holy Spirit of God will convict you of sin if you let Him, if you’ll stop lying and let Him convict you of sin.

#### **B. The Difference Between Holy Spirit Conviction and Satanic Accusation**

Now, what most of us need to learn, however, is the difference between Holy Spirit conviction and satanic accusation. Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, will convict you of sin. Satan will accuse you of sin. Satan doesn’t play fair. First of all, before you sin, Satan whispers in your ear and says, “You can get away with it. Go ahead.” And, after you sin, he says, “You’ll never get away with it.” He will convict you and try to drive you to despair. Let me tell you the difference accusation and conviction, and this is very important—very important.

##### **1. The Holy Spirit Will Convict You Legitimately**

The Holy Spirit of God will only convict you legitimately. Now, what do I mean by that? The Holy Spirit of God will only convict you of sin that has not been forgiven and cleansed. And, but the devil will want you to dwell upon past sins that have already been forgiven and already been forgotten. When God deals with your sin, God forgives your sin, God cleanses your sin, and God forgets your sin.

Well, that brings up an interesting question: How can God forget any thing, because He knows everything? Well, he says, “Their iniquity will I remember against them no more” (Jeremiah 31:34). Sure, God intellectually knows of your sin, but He sees it now—He remembers it—as forgiven sin. And, that’s the way you need to remember your sin. You can’t forget it if you did something horrible—you can’t just intellectually forget it. But, you can remember it as sin that has been forgiven.

Now, once you are forgiven, that sin is buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness. God says, “As far as the east is from the west, so far will I remove their transgression from them.” But the devil will dredge up something from the recesses of your memory, some sin that has been put under the blood, and try to bring you into double jeopardy over that sin. It is an illegitimate conviction of sin. Remember, the Holy Spirit of God will



convict you of sin that has not been confessed and cleansed. The devil will oftentimes convict you of sin that's already under the blood, try to resurrect it, and dig it up. You don't have to take that. If it has been forgiven, what God has called clean, "...let no man call unclean." Amen?

## **2. The Holy Spirit Will Convict You Specifically**

Now, secondly, the Holy Spirit of God will convict you specifically; the devil, many times, will convict you generally. Now, what is the difference? Well, the Holy Spirit of God will say, "Thus and thus have you done."

Well, I'm going to use an illustration I hadn't intended to use. You say, "Well, Adrian, what was your sin? I can't think...but I want to know what you did so bad?" Well, the Holy Spirit just convicted me I wasted some time this afternoon. You say, "Well, that's not so bad." It was to me. I just, you know, I just wasted some time, and I had to get on my knees and say, "God, I'm sorry. I just wasted some time, some time I should have been doing something else." And, but you know what? The Holy Spirit put His finger right on my heart. He said, "This is what you've done." So, I said, "Lord," when I got on my knees—and by the way, I didn't intend to tell you this, but okay, you're looking inside of me—I got on my knees. I said, "God, I wasted time. I should not have wasted time. I'm sorry. Forgive me." And, you know what? He did. Now, that's gone. It's in the grave of God's forgetfulness, because the Holy Spirit said, "Thus and thus did you do."

Now, when the devil convicts you of sin, the devil does not convict you specifically, many times. He would just simply say, "Oh, you're bad—you're bad. You're no good. You're a sinner." And, he makes you feel bad mostly all over. You see, the Holy Spirit—we have Dr. Vincent here on the front row, a medical doctor—the Holy Spirit is like a medical doctor. Sometimes He'll put his finger and say, "Does that hurt?" Say, "Oww! Yeah!" He says, "Aha!" By the way, if you ever have a gall bladder attack, let me tell you what to do: put your fingers right under there, and push up. If you can do it, you ain't got it! All right now, listen: the Holy Spirit of God—the Holy Spirit of God—will convict you specifically. He'll put His finger right on the sore spot. The devil will just kind of make you feel bad mostly all over. And so, if the devil doesn't convict you of sin that's already been forgiven—or accuse you of sin that's already been forgiven—he will accuse you generally and not specifically. But, the Holy Spirit will say, "Thus and thus have you done."

## **3. The Holy Spirit Will Convict You Redemptively**

Now, I'll tell you the third thing: the Holy Spirit will convict you redemptively; the devil will accuse you condemnably. Now, what the Holy Spirit does—He convicts you that He might draw you to confession, and cleansing, and fellowship. Remember what He says?



“These things have I written unto you that you might have fellowship with us” (1 John 1:3). The Holy Spirit of God wants to redeem you; He wants to bring you in back into the family. God’s great heart is to love you, to welcome you, to bring you back. What the devil does is want to drive you further and further from God. And, he’ll say, “You’re no good. You don’t belong in church. Why are you going down there pretending? You don’t have any right to be a part of that bunch!” And, you just withdraw. That’s not the Holy Spirit of God doing that; that is the devil. Conviction draws you to Christ; accusation drives you from Christ.

And so, first of all, there must be that conviction of sin. Don’t lie to yourself. Don’t lie to others. Don’t lie to God. The Holy Spirit of God puts a finger on the sore spot. That’s good, because what He wants to do is to have you cleansed, because He loves you. And, He convicts you legitimately. He will convict you specifically. He will convict you redemptively that He might draw you back to Him. Got that? Now, that’s what we call “the conviction of sin.”

## II. The Confession of Sin

Now, let’s notice the confession of sin. When the Holy Spirit of God convicts you, then you are to confess your sin. Look, if you will, in verse 9: *“If we confess our sins”*—do you see that?—*“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all”*—A-L-L. Thank God for that! Hallelujah!—*“from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9).

Now, how, then, should we confess our sins? And, by the way, there’s a difference—just as there’s a difference between conviction and accusation—there is a difference between the admission of a sin and the confession of a sin. You can admit your sin without confessing it, in the Bible sense. You can say, “Oh, yeah, I did wrong.” That is an admission of sin. A confession of sin is the result of the conviction of the Holy Spirit. The word *confess* here is a word, *homologeō*, and it means “to say the same thing”—“to say the same thing.” When the Holy Spirit of God says, “That is a sin,” you agree; you say the same thing. You say about that sin what God says about that sin. *You don’t just simply stand over here—and let’s let these speakers over here be your sin—and you don’t just say, “Oh yes, I have sinned.” That’s the admission of sin. A confession of sin is, you come over here on God’s side, and you say, “God, I will say with You what You say about it. I agree with You. I say the same thing as You say. God, I see sin as You see sin.” That is a confession of sin.* Now, 1 John 1:9: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

All right now, how do you confess your sin?

### A. Confess the Sin Immediately

Number one: Confess it immediately. This is in the present tense. It means it is to be a habitual practice. Don't save your sins up to confess them on Sunday, or even at the end of the day. If you're going down the road, and you get a speck of dust in your eye—your eye is a very sensitive part of your anatomy—you don't say, "Well, I'll get that out this evening." You stop, and you say, "Hold it—I've got something in my eye. Would you help me get that out of my eye?" Why? Because it's an irritant. Now, that's the way sin ought to be to you: the minute you're aware that there's something that has broken fellowship with you, you do that, because He's talking here about a habitual practice—that is, habitually confessing our sin to the Lord. The minute you are aware of it, confess it immediately.

### B. Confess the Sin Specifically

And then, number two: Confess it specifically. You'll never get that freedom unless you learn to confess sin specifically. Remember we said that the Holy Spirit will convict you specifically? Notice what it says: it says, "*If we confess our sins*" (1 John 1:9)—S-I-N-S. It's plural. Not "our sin." He's not talking about our sin nature. Our sin nature was nailed to the cross. He is talking about those things that we do when we lose our temper, when we have an evil thought, when we're filled with pride, when we have illegitimate anger, when we are selfish, any thing that we do that's un-Christlike. Then, we call it by name.

Sometimes I hear people pray—and they're, many times, wonderful people, and I'm not here to monitor people's prayers—but they say, "And Lord, if we've sinned, forgive us." Well, friend, that just doesn't work. I mean, that's so generalized: "If we have sinned, forgive us." No—no. Have you ever had any body to come to you and say, "Well, I don't think I did anything wrong, but if I did do anything wrong, I want you to forgive me"? You know, "If I did anything wrong, or if you think it..." You know, it's far better for that person to come and say, "Thus and such have I done. I'm sorry. Would you please forgive me?" You call it by name. Name it, and nail it. Call it by name. You know, we sing that song:

Count your [many] blessings, name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done (Johnson Oatman, Jr.)

If you count your many sins and name them one by one, it'll surprise you what you've done.

Sometimes I, when I have a quiet time, sometimes I just get a sheet of paper, and I say, "Here I am, Holy Spirit. I mean, do radical on me. Look inside my own heart, and search me, and try me, and know my heart, and see if there be some wicked way in me." And, I wait before the Lord. I begin to develop a list sometimes, and I'd get that list

down there. And then, I take those things one at a time, confess it, call it by name, agree with God about it, claim 1 John 1:9, and draw a line through it, and say, “Thank God! That’s done!” It’s done. It’s cleansed. It’s forgiven.

So, you confess your sin. You confess your sin immediately. You confess your sin specifically.

### C. Confess the Sin Confidently

And, you confess it confidently. Listen to this: *“If we confess our [sin]”—“our sins”—“he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). Now, faithful and just means that if He did not do it, He would be unfaithful and unjust. Why would God be unfaithful, and why would God be unjust, if God didn’t forgive our sins? Simple: Jesus died that our sins might be forgiven. Now, I don’t mean to be crass about it, but there’s a Calvary contract—there is a Calvary contract. First John 1:7: *“the blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son [cleanses] us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7). And, you and I have every expectation confidently that He will forgive us—He will cleanse us and forgive us.

Not only does He forgive us; He cleanses us. You see, it would be one thing if He just forgave us. That would be hallelujah ground. If Brother Jim Whitmire steals \$50 from me; and then, he comes back, and he says, “Pastor, I stole \$50 from you. I’m sorry. Here’s the \$50”—plus the interest, Jim. And, he says, “Here. I want you to forgive me.” Well, I would, but I couldn’t cleanse him. He still stole it. I couldn’t cleanse him. All he has done has paid it back. But, he did an act—he did a transgression—that was a sin. No matter whether he paid it back or not, he stole \$50. And, all I could do is forgive him. But, the Bible says, *“If we confess our [sin], he is faithful and just to forgive us sins, and”—watch—“and to cleanse us”—“and to cleanse us”—“from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). You’re not patched up, folks. I mean, it is gone. You are clean—absolutely, totally clean. You say, “Yes, from some things.” No, from all things. *“He is faithful and just to forgive us our [sin], and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). And so, you can do it confidently.

## III. The Cleansing of Sin

Now, here’s the third and final thing. We’re talking about the confession of sin. We’ve talked about the conviction and confessing of sin. Then, let’s talk about the cleansing of sin. Once you have been forgiven, what do you do? Do you say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, do you mean all I have to do is just confess and be clean? Well, if that’s true, then sin is really not such a big consequence after all”? Oh, you missed the whole thing, friend—you missed the whole thing. Look, if you will now, in chapter 2, verses 1 and 2: *“My little*

*children, these things write I unto you, that [you] sin not*" (1 John 2:1). He's not writing to say, "You see how easy it is to get forgiven, so just go ahead and sin." No, he's saying, "I am writing that you sin not" (1 John 2:1).

Some people—they say, "Well, I don't believe in eternal security. If I believed in eternal security, I'd just get saved and sin all I want to." Well, friend, I sin all I want to; I sin more than I want to—I don't want to. In the light of Calvary, that message written in red that we heard tonight—in the light of that—I don't want to sin. *"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"* (1 John 2:1). He's up there pleading our cause for us tonight and cleansing us moment by moment.

## Conclusion

So, as we come to the Lord's Table tonight to take of these elements, may they remind us of 1 John 1:7: *"the blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son [cleanses] us from all sin."*

There's not a mother's child in here tonight but can be as clean as the driven snow.

*"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be...white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Isaiah 1:18). For *"the blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son [cleanses] us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7).

# Things That Hinder Fellowship

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 4, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 1:5–2:6**

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

**W**ould you take God's Word and be finding 1 John? That's back near the Book of the Revelation. And, we're studying the Book of 1 John—it's a short book, only five chapters—and we're entitling this study "The Sweetest Fellowship This Side of Heaven." And, when you do what John tells you, the only way that it can get sweeter is just to cut out and go to Glory. But, we're learning how to have fellowship—the sweetest fellowship this side of Heaven. And today, we're going to be looking at things that hinder fellowship. And, you know, we can have the potentiality for fellowship, but we can let

things come into our lives that will defraud us of the fellowship that is our heritage in the Lord Jesus.

I was listening to Billy Graham on the radio a while back, and he told a story that I enjoyed. He said a little boy went into a drug store and asked if he could borrow the telephone. The druggist said, "Fine." And, the little boy dialed the grocery store in this little town, and when the grocer answered, he said, "Do you need a stock clerk, somebody who can come in and stock the shelves, and carry the packages and so forth, and sweep the floor?" And, the man said, "No, we already have a boy who does that." And, he says, "Well, does he do a good job? Maybe you need someone else; maybe he's not adequate." And, the grocer said, "No, he's very adequate. We're very satisfied with the boy that we have." And, the little fellow said, "Well, thank you," and he hung up. And, the druggist said, "Well," he said, "I'm sorry, son, that you didn't get the job." "No," he said, "you don't understand. I already have the job over there. I was just checking up on myself. I wanted to see if he really appreciated me." Now, what I want you to do today is to check up on yourself and see if there is, in your heart and in your life, something that is keeping you from having the sweetest fellowship this side of Heaven. That something is most likely sin. *It is secret faults that cause moral earthquakes.*

And, we're going to be talking today about secret faults—things that we hide, things that we disguise, things that keep us from fellowship with God. Look, if you will now, in chapter 1 and verse 5: *"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all"—and I love that word all—"from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:5–10). "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:1–6).*

Now, we're talking about things that keep us from fellowship and primarily secret

faults, hidden sins. You know, the Bible is the only book in the world that has the answer to the problem of sin, and the way to deal with sin, primarily, with specificity, is to recognize sin for what it is. We have a generation today that doesn't even like the word *sin*. The word *sin* is out of date. About the only sin today is to call sin "sin." We want to call sin anything; we want to call it a "mistake," a "misjudgment." But, Jesus did not die for errors. He did not die for mistakes. He did not die for misjudgments. Jesus died for sin.

Now, we live in a day of behavioristic psychology, where the psychologist says that we're just the sum total of our genes, and chromosomes, and environment. And so, man is not wicked; he's weak. He's not sinful; he's sick. He's not evil; he is ill. And so, therefore, we never really deal with the problem, because we never really get to the root of the problem. We've been spurred on by evolution; we've been taught that man was not created; he evolved from some primordial soup. They never tell us where the soup came from, but we have, sort of from a one-cell organism life, spontaneously began, and some primordial soup. *Well, if that's true, we've come from soup to nuts*—I can tell you that. Man did not evolve; man was created in the image of God.

And, man sinned willfully. And, sin is not an accident; it's not an incident. It is high treason against God. You see, if you don't understand sin for what it is, you will never, ever deal with sin, understand the remedy that God has provided. If you think that sin is merely a problem to be fixed, you're going to be looking for a cure, rather than forgiveness and cleansing; you're going to find you're going to try to compensate for sin or commiserate with sin. But, thank God for 1 John, which tells us how to deal with the sin problem and how to have fellowship with God.

Folks, I'm telling you, the boys and girls in school today—and many of our adults, as I have seen from watching television—have lost the concept of sin today. They don't understand what sin is.

#### A. **Evolution Is Not the Answer**

The evolutionist says, "We're just on our way upward, and, you know, time will kill the beast within us. Just give us time, and we will progress on and on." Well, you can believe that if you want to. I'm not a cousin of King Kong. And, you can believe that if you want to.

#### B. **Education Is Not the Answer**

Education says that what we need to do is just educate people, and if we get more learning, then we'll be able to deal with the sin problem. Is that true? What about Nazi Germany? They were highly educated—the Nazis. What is happening on some of our universities today? They have become cesspools of sin and higher learning at the same



time. When I was in college, I had a professor who taught psychology and logic. I admired him very much; he was one of the most intelligent men I'd ever met. He had a brain full, but he committed suicide—my college professor.

### C. **Science Is Not the Answer**

Science says that perhaps, by genetic engineering, we can just breed this thing out of man 'till finally we create the bionic man, and the superwoman, and a different race. And, we're actually trying to do that now with genetic engineering, and parents are trying to pre-arrange the birth of the children.

### D. **Sociology Is Not the Answer**

The sociologist says, "Well, we'll just change the environment, and then man will be better." Well, if this is true, we would expect people who live in the best environment not to be bothered with sin, but that's just not true. Sin is no respecter of environment, whether it's the ghetto or the high-rise. And, may I remind you that man fell in the Garden of Eden—you can't have a better environment than that.

### E. **Psychology Is Not the Answer**

The psychologists and the psychiatrists are just saying, "Well, these are just feelings that we've generated within ourselves, and we need to get rid of the guilt feelings." It's not the guilt feelings we need to get rid of; it's the guilt that causes the feelings.

### F. **The Word of God Is the Only Answer**

Thank God for this Word. I'm telling you, folks—listen to me; listen to me—the only book—the only book, the only book, the only book—that has the answer to the sin problem is God's Word.

Now, this is what we're dealing with today—is the sin problem. *It is the secret faults that cause the moral earthquakes.* Now, how does God deal with sin? Well, when I receive Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior, when I repent of my sin, I trust Him, I receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, I am born again. And then, as a result of that, sin, judicially—judicially—now, listen to the word—judicially, legally, is dealt with forever and ever. Hebrews 8, verse 12: *"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more"* (Hebrews 8:12). When you get saved, every sin—past, present, and future—is buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness. Now, you need to understand that. Isaiah chapter 43 and verse 25: *"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake...[I] will not remember thy sins"* (Isaiah 43:25). Folks, that's good news. That is the gospel of grace. Jeremiah 31, verse 34: *"for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no*

more” (Jeremiah 31:34). Isaiah 1:18: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be...white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be [like] wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

Now, when God says that He will remember our iniquities no more (Jeremiah 31:34), does that mean that God cannot recall them? No, no, no—God is not talking about an intellectual remembrance. God says, “*I will remember their sin [against them] no more*” (Jeremiah 31:34). God remembers our sin, but He remembers them as sins that have been forgiven and, therefore, forgotten as sins. And, in the same way, I can never forget the sin that I have committed intellectually, but when I remember that sin, I don’t remember it as a sin held against me; I remember it as a sin forgiven and forgotten by the grace of God. Thank God for that.

Now, that’s the way God deals with us judicially. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. If God were to put one half of one sin on my judicial record, one half of one sin would be enough to damn me and do me forever. Therefore, I cannot behave my way into heaven. If I’m going to be saved, I’ve got to be saved by the grace of God. You agree with that.

Now, that’s the way God deals with our sins judicially. But then, how does God deal with our sins day by day? If I’m saved by grace and kept by grace, and no sin will ever be brought up against me anymore, and my sin is buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness, how does God deal with me, Adrian, day by day, when I’m proud or arrogant, or when I tell a lie, when I exaggerate, when I have a lustful look? How does God deal with me day by day? Not as judge, but as Father—as Father. Now, we’re not talking about legal judgment, but were talking about, in this chapter, God dealing with us in a parental way.

## 1. Sonship

You see, we have two vital relationships as a Christian. One is sonship. When I’m born into the family of God, sonship is established, and sonship will never change. In a parallel way, I was born into the Rogers family. There’s nothing that can ever undo that. I was born, conceived, born—I am a Rogers; I’m Adrian Rogers. When the sun, the moon, the stars have grown cold, what happens when I was born still is an event; it can never ever be undone. That’s the way it is when you’re born again—that once you’re born into the family of God, you’re in the family of God. That relationship we call “sonship.”

## 2. Fellowship

But, there’s another relationship that can change, and that is called “fellowship.” Now, John, here, is not talking about sonship; John, here, is talking about fellowship. You

see, I am my father's son, and when I was growing up, I always had relationship, but I didn't always have fellowship. There'd be times when my dad would tell me to do thus and thus, or not to do thus and thus, and I would do what he told me not to do, and didn't do what he told me to do. And, there would be, sometimes, a rupture in fellowship. And, my dad would carry me out—we didn't have a woodshed, but we did have a pump house—carry me out to the pump house, and *apply the board of education to the seat of knowledge*. My dad—don't get the wrong idea—he never whipped us on an empty stomach. He just turned us over, and there's where he did it. Now, he did that because he loved me. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, "Whom the Father loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives" (Hebrews 12:6). Sonship is established by birth; fellowship, by conduct.

Now, what John is talking about here in this book, and the forgiveness of sin, and the cleansing of our daily sins, is not a matter of... He's not dealing with us as Judge, but He is dealing with us as Father. This is the way that the Father deals with His son. For example, look, if you will, in verse 3: *"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that [you]...may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ"* (1 John 1:3). So, he's not talking about judicial or legal forgiveness here; he's talking about parental forgiveness, even as Jesus Christ taught us, when He taught us to pray, "Our Father, forgive us our trespasses." You see, this is a family prayer.

We're talking now about how to have fellowship with God. Many of you are saved; you're on the way to Heaven, but you're going second-class because you're not enjoying that fellowship, that *koinonia*, that we were talking about so long ago.

Now, having set the stage, I want us to see now how we can restore that fellowship, how we can get rid of those secret faults, those hidden sins, that divide us from the Father's smile, and the Father's face, and have that sweet, wonderful fellowship with God.

## **I. The Conviction of Sin**

Now, the first thing I want you to see is how God convicts of sin—how the Father convicts of sin. Notice in verse 5—look at it: *"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"* (1 John 1:5–7).

## A. The Evolution of a Lie

Now, take your Bible, and I want you to look at some verses here. Look at the times he talks about lying here. Look, if we can, in verse 6: *"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie"* (1 John 1:6)—just underscore that. Then, look, if you will, in verse 8: *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"* (1 John 1:8). Then, look in verse 10: *"If we say...we have not sinned, we make him a liar"* (1 John 1:10). Each time he says, "If we say... If we say... If we say..." Now, what he's saying is this: we're saying one thing and doing another; we are pretending, here. And, what he is talking about here is what I want to call "the evolution of a lie." I want you to notice the three steps that follow each one of these "If we say..."

### 1. We Lie to Others

First of all, we may say—we may lie—to deny sin—verses 5 and 6: *"If we say...we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie"* (1 John 1:6). Now, that's what happens this morning in church. Look around. I mean, here we are in, this morning, in this building—thousands and thousands of people in one building. Every one of you looks so holy. Every one of you looks so clean. Each looks so happy in Jesus, but do you think every one has his or her heart right with God this morning? They're not. I've been preaching long enough to know that is not true. I've been preaching long enough to know people can come in church, hold a Bible in their hand, sing the songs, nod their heads, and say, "Amen," and down in their heart, things are not right. *"If we say...we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie"* (1 John 1:6). There are some living lies sitting on seats in this building, this morning, and you know in your heart that you are playing a game—you're playing the church game; you're playing a role. But, that's what happens. We get sin in our hearts—may be big, may be small, but it is there. And, we come to church. We go to Sunday School. We teach the class. We sing in the choir. We do whatever we do, but there is that secret fault—there's that secret fault. *"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie"* (1 John 1:6).

### 2. We Lie to Ourselves

Now, what happens when a man does that? After he does that for a while, do you know what happens to him? He gets to believing his own lie. Now, notice what he says here—look at the next step here in verse 8: *"If we say...we have no sin, we deceive ourselves"* (1 John 1:8). When you set out to deceive somebody else, do you know who you're going to deceive most of all? You are going to deceive yourself. A man who deceives himself is on the verge of a mental breakdown. When a man cannot even believe himself, when he blurs the distinction between light and dark, between truth and the lie... And, there are many of you who have begun to say to yourself, after you've

stonewalled God for a while, and after you have moved in and out of the fellowship and nothing seems to happen—you still sing in the choir; you still teach the Sunday School class; you still are in the congregation; you still shake hands; you still buddy up with all the people—but you say, “Maybe it’s not sin at all. Maybe I’m all right. Maybe it was just an error. Maybe it’s a psychological idiosyncrasy, or maybe God doesn’t call that a sin. And, maybe I am a pretty good fellow.” And so, you begin to smooth over your sin.

### **3. We Lie to God**

And, the first step in the evolution of a lie: first of all, we deceive others; then, we deceive ourselves; and then, finally, we lie to God. We lie to others; then, we lie to ourselves, and then we lie to God. Look, if you will, down in verse 10: he says here, “*If we say...we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us*” (1 John 1:10). Well, you see, when we call God a liar, we’re the ones who’s lying— isn’t that true?—because God cannot lie. And so, God brings us under conviction, and we say, “Oh, no, no, God, You’re wrong. It was a mistake. It was an error. It was a glandular malfunction. It was the environment. It was legitimate resentment. It is righteous indignation,” whatever it is. And, we don’t let the Holy Spirit of God convict us of that sin.

First of all, we lie to others; then, we lie to ourselves, and then we have the unmitigated gall and audacity to stonewall God and to lie to Almighty God. We lie to deny sin. We lie to deceive self, and we lie to defy the Savior. Now, when we do that—when we do that—fellowship is completely broken; it is gone. We have stepped out of the light; we’re over in the darkness.

Now, how does God bring us back? Well, God will not bring us back unless we expose ourselves to the light. You stay over here in the darkness—there’ll never be any conviction. But, if you, as a child of God, will just step back into the light, God will shine the light of His holiness upon your life, and God will bring you under conviction.

### **B. The Difference Between Holy Spirit Conviction and Satanic Accusation**

Now, it is very important—very important—listen to me—it is very, very, very important as a child of God that you learn the difference between Holy Spirit conviction and satanic accusation. Now, the devil is “*the accuser of [the] brethren*” (Revelation 12:10). The Holy Spirit is the One who loves us and convicts us, and so many times people do not know the difference between Holy Spirit conviction and satanic accusation. Now, the devil is very clever. Before you sin, you know what the devil tells you? The devil says, “Go ahead and do it; you can get away with it.” And, after you sin, you know what the devil tells you? “You’ll never get away with it.” That’s exactly what he’ll do—he will entice you to sin and then condemn you because you did. “Oh, you can get away with it. You’ll never get away with it.” That’s accusation—that’s accusation. That’s not the Holy

Spirit of God.

Let me tell you how the Holy Spirit of God convicts you. When the Holy Spirit of God shines that light upon you—and there's nothing purer than light; God is light—and when the Holy Spirit of God, who is light, shines upon you, you will come under conviction. As a child of God, if you will just turn to the light, and face up to the light, He will pull the veil of darkness back of those lies that you've been telling others, and telling yourself, and telling God. He will expose that sin. Now, let me tell you how the Holy Spirit of God will convict you.

### **1. The Holy Spirit Convicts Legitimately**

And, first of all—listen very carefully—first of all, the Holy Spirit of God will convict you legitimately—legitimately. Now, you say, “What do you mean by that, Pastor?” He will never convict you over any sin that has been confessed and cleansed. If it comes up again, it is not the Holy Spirit of God doing that; it is the devil who is going back into your past, bringing up some sin that has been cleansed, forgotten, and put in the grave of God's forgetfulness. And, he brings it up again. One man told his pastor, “Pastor, I can't get peace.” “Why?” “Well, I did a terrible, horrible thing.” Pastor said, “Have you confessed it to God?” He said, “I've confessed it 1,000 times.” He said, “That's 999 times too many.” Confess it once; praise Him 1,000 times about it. If it comes up again, it is the devil trying to bring you into double jeopardy, and the devil will only accuse you of sin already forgiven and cleansed. The Holy Spirit will convict you legitimately. He'll never come into your past and deal with something that's already been dealt with. Now, if that happens to you, you just tell the devil, “I'm not going to take that stuff.”

### **2. The Holy Spirit Convicts Specifically**

Number two: Not only will the Holy Spirit of God convict you legitimately, but the Holy Spirit of God will convict you specifically. Now, if the devil can't go into your past and drag up something that's already been dealt with, the devil will just convict you vaguely just make you feel bad, just make you feel unworthy, just make you feel no good. So many times you hear Christians pray, “Well, I know I'm just a poor, old, unworthy sinner.” Where'd you get that? You're not just a poor, old, unworthy sinner; you're the righteousness of God in Christ. You're a child of God. You're a prince and a king. You're next of kin to the Holy Trinity. Jesus is not ashamed to call you His brothers. The devil just wants to make you feel that you're no good, that you're unworthy. You feel bad mostly all over—that's just accusation. You don't have to take it.

Let me tell you how the Holy Spirit of God will convict you: the Holy Spirit of God will convict you with specificity. If you do something, and it has not been cleansed, and forgotten, and buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness, the Holy Spirit will say, “Hey,



that was a lie you just told. Hey, Adrian, you were rude to Joyce just then.” “No.” “Yes, you were—yes, you were.” **And He, like a good doctor, will put His finger on the sore spot and push. Aah! Does it hurt there? Believe me, it hurts right there. That’s the way the Holy Spirit of God does.** With legitimacy and with specificity, He will convict you of that particular thing. That’s Holy Spirit conviction.

### **3. The Holy Spirit Convicts Redemptively**

But, not only will He convict you legitimately and with specificity, but He will convict you redemptively. Do you know what accusation does? It discourages. Accusation drives you away from God. Accusation says, “There’s no way. Woe is me; I’m done for. I might as well quit. I’m finished. I’ve had it!” Holy Spirit conviction says, “Here’s what you’ve done, but if you come to Jesus, He’ll forgive you and cleanse you. And, come on back into the fellowship; you’re loved.” That, my friend, is the way that God convicts of sin. And, you don’t have to take this mess from the devil, who is *“the accuser of [the] brethren”* (Revelation 12:10), who is accusing you night and day before the throne and is accusing you to your own face. That dirty devil! Thank God for the precious Holy Spirit, who is light.

## **II. The Cleansing of Sin**

Now, we’ve talked about the conviction of sin. Let’s talk a little bit more about the cleansing of sin. Once the Holy Spirit of God shows you that this particular sin in your heart and in your life...and He does it now with specificity, and He does it legitimately and not condemnably, to draw you to Jesus. Now, notice what he says here in verse 9. Take your Bibles, and look at it—look at it—verse 9: *“If”*—here’s another *if*. You notice he says, “If we say... If we say... If we say.” But now, he says another *if*—*“If we confess our sins”*—not stonewall God, not deny our sins, but—*“If we confess our sins, he”*—God—*“is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). Now, notice this is not the judicial cleansing that we got when we were saved. This is talking about fellowship with God; this is talking about God dealing with us as children.

Now, we confess our sin. Now, the word *confess* is an interesting word. It is the Greek word *homologeō*, which means “to say the same”—“to say the same.” That’s literally what the word means—“to say the same.” Two words—one word meaning “to say,” the other word, *homo*, meaning “the same”: “to say the same.” A confession of sin is an agreement with God; it is saying with God what God says about that sin. It is not just saying, “Well, I did it, okay.” That’s not a confession; that is an admission. A confession of sin is to say about that sin what God says about that sin. Over here is the sinner. I am the sinner. I’ve done wrong. I’ve sinned against God. The Holy Spirit of God



puts the finger on me legitimately, specifically, redemptively, and I then confess my sin. I come over here with God, and I say with God what God says about that sin. I agree with God. I get off the side of my sin. I get over here on God's side, and I say with God what God says about my sin. I've confessed my sin then.

Okay, now let me tell you how to confess that sin, and let's just break it down a little bit more, because since we've broken down conviction with specificity, let's just break down confession with specificity. How should I confess my sin?

#### A. Confess the Sin Immediately

I need to confess my sin immediately—immediately. Write down the word *immediately*—at least write it in your mind. “*If we confess our [sin]*” (1 John 1:9)—that, in the Greek language, is in the present tense. It's not talking about something that you have done; it's talking about something that you do. I looked it up in one translation, and it literally says that “we are continually confessing our sins.” That is, it is to be a habit of our lives. You don't just confess your sins at the end of the day, much less at the end of the week, much less during the annual revival meeting. If we make a habit of confessing our sins... *If you get a speck of dust in your eye, when do you try to get it out? At the end of the week? No, immediately. Be sensitive to sin.*

Now, you know what many of us do? Many of us—we're down here living on such a low plane, way down here, just living way down here, and then somehow we hear Adrian preach, or we get in a revival meeting, or we'll read a book, and we get right with God, and we have a religious spasm. We're up here for a while, and then that lasts about *that long*. And, we get down here in the valley again; we're riding in the valley. And then, we come up again, and then we're down again. Have you ever ridden that rollercoaster? Sometimes I'm up; sometimes I'm down. Oh yes, Lord. But, most of the time you're down more than you're up. That's not the Spirit-filled life. Get off that rollercoaster. Let me tell you what the Spirit-filled life is; let me tell you what the victorious life is: the victorious life is not living without any temptation, any fault, any failure. We all sin—that's what John is telling us.

But, here's the victorious life: we learn the truths that we're talking about today. We get up here on a higher plane; we get right with God. We're walking in the light, and when we're walking in the light, the minute we sin, the Holy Spirit says, “You did wrong.” That moment, what do you do? Confess it that moment. Now, here's the Spirit-filled life: *tsk-tsk, tsk-tsk, tsk-tsk, tsk-tsk*. Just like that—you just stay up there. The moment that happens—that time, that moment, that self-same moment—you confess your sins. Do it immediately. Nobody else may even know you've done it. I mean, you may be at the dinner table and have said something or done something—you say, “O God, in the

name of Jesus, forgive me.” He does—He does. You do it immediately.

### **B. Confess the Sin Specifically**

And, number two: You do it specifically—specifically. You see, look, he says, *“If we confess our sins”* (1 John 1:9)—not our *sin*, our *sins*. He puts it in the plural. We’re not talking about the sin nature. We’re not talking about the whole body of sin. We’re talking about what we did particularly. Call it by name—that’s the painful part. You know, have you ever been in these prayer meetings—they say, “Lord, if we’ve sinned, forgive us,” or, “Forgive us all our sins”? From my opinion, you’re just wasting your breath to pray that kind of a prayer. I’ll tell you, if you want to do business with God, you say, “God, forgive me for reading that dirty book. I dishonored You. I dishonored my wife. I dishonored my own body, God. I put filth in my own mind. I’m so sorry, God. I shouldn’t have done it. I won’t do it again. Forgive me.” He will. “Forgive me, Lord, for that lie. Forgive me, Lord, for that selfishness. Forgive me, Lord, for that pride.” You name it and nail it. Listen, you do it immediately, and you do it specifically.

### **C. Confess the Sin Confidently**

And, let me tell you another thing: you do it confidently—confidently. Look, if you will, in verse 9: *“If we confess our sins, he is”*—listen to this—*“faithful and just to forgive us our sins”* (1 John 1:9)—f aithful and just. If He didn’t do it, He would be a liar and a crook—He would be unfaithful and unjust. If you agree with God, *“he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). Not some, all—all, all, all, A-double-L—all. You like that? I do. Sometimes the devil tells you you’ve done something so bad, now you can’t get forgiveness. That’s a lie out of Hell. There’s no sin that the blood of Jesus Christ cannot cleanse. Listen—listen—to what the Bible says: “the blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7)—that’s verse 7. *“He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us”*—*“to cleanse us”*—*“from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). I have that confidence. Thank God for the precious double detergent of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, because not only does He forgive; He cleanses—He cleanses. He washes out the stain. He just takes the inward part. It is gone, forgotten, washed whiter than snow.

## **III. The Conquest of Sin**

Well, I’ve run out of time. I’ve got a third point to this message. We’re only on two. First, there’s the conviction of sin; secondly, the cleansing of sin. Let me give you the third one with just that much: it’s the conquest of sin. Look in chapter 2, verse 1. Do you think because cleansing and forgiveness is by grace, and all you have to do is ask for it, that God is just encouraging us to sin by writing this down? No, he’s not encouraging us to

sin; he is encouraging us not to sin. Look at it: *“My little children, these things write I unto you, that [you] sin not”*—he’s not saying to sin; he’s saying, “Don’t sin.” But, he says—*“if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”*—and that word *advocate*, that’s just a fancy word for *lawyer*. I have a Savior who’s interceding for me. The Bible says, *“He ever [lives] to make intercession for [us]”* (Hebrews 7:25), presenting His precious blood. Thank God for that! Hallelujah for that! See, the Bible says—*“he is the propitiation for our [sin]: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world”* (1 John 2:1–2). That’s the reason why I don’t believe in any limited atonement. He died for everybody—everybody. The whole world He died for. *“And he is the propitiation for our sins”* (1 John 2:2). What does that word *propitiation* mean? It means He’s the satisfaction for it. He satisfies the demands of a righteous and a holy God, and that’s the reason he says in verse 9, *“He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins”* (1 John 1:9). Why? Because He is the satisfaction; He is the propitiation. For those sins He died. Thank God for that.

But, he isn’t saying, therefore, just to be light and cavalier about your sins. You read on down there a few more verses—he talks about when we live with Him, in us the love of God is perfected (1 John 2:5). A slave serves because he has to. An employee serves because he needs to. A child of God serves because he wants to. I mean, there’s the love of God—that God would save me to begin with, and then cleanse me. You think that encourages me to sin? No, my friend, the desire of my heart is never to sin again—I mean never, never again. But, if I sin, thank God, I have an advocate, and He’s the propitiation for my sin.

## Conclusion

Don’t we have a wonderful Savior? Hallelujah! What a Jesus! What a Savior that we have! You know, it seems to me if people understand what we have in Jesus, you couldn’t keep them away with a machine gun. But yet, the old stubborn hearts—there are so many people just stonewalled themselves against God. John is saying in verse 4, chapter 1: *“I’m writing this that you might have fullness of joy, that you might have fellowship with God and fellowship with one another—the sweetest fellowship this side of Heaven”* (1 John 1:4).

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, and no one is looking around, you remember what we talked about—that legal salvation where God forgives your sins, never to bring them up against you anymore? You can have that today. You can become a child of God. You can become twice-born in a world of once-born people by receiving Jesus if you would pray a prayer like this: “God, I am a sinner. I cannot save myself. I need to be

saved. My sin deserves judgment, but I want mercy. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You”—tell Him that; tell Him that—“I do trust You right now, with all of my heart. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Jesus.” Pray that and mean it, and He will save you. And then, after He saves you, day by day He will cleanse you and deal with you no longer as a Judge, but now as a Father, if you’ll just put your faith in Jesus.

Father, I pray that many will say that today. In His name, the name of Jesus. Amen.

# True Confessions

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 5, 1992

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 John 1:9

*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

1 JOHN 1:9

## Outline

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

And, if you've been a Christian very long, you know 1 John 1:9 by heart, which says, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9)

When I was a young man, I used to go into the store—the drug stores, the supermarkets—and some times I would see a magazine called *True Confessions*. Do they still have that magazine? Do you know? Lift your hand. You wouldn't lift it if you knew, would you? *True Confessions*—any of you ever even heard the title? Let me see your hand. Sure. *True Confessions*. Well, that's what I want to talk to you about is true confessions, because much that is called confession is not confession.

Now, this verse, which is one of the most beautiful promises in the Bible, starts with an *if*. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John 1:9) Now, let’s look at the key, or the problem here, in verse 9: *“If we confess our sins…”* (1 John 1:9) Let’s look at our sins for a moment.

## **I. What Is the Matter of Sin?**

What is this matter of sin? We have a sophisticated society today that has the word *sin* almost as an antiquity. We, today, don’t believe in the awfulness and the horror of sin. It’s sort of an old-fashioned word. We modern sophisticates—we like to talk of “error,” or “mistake,” or “misjudgment,” or “physiological maladjustment,” or “a stumbling upward”—anything but sin.

As a matter of fact, sin is so much around us today, there’s a tidal wave of sin. And, that sin is pouring right into the living rooms of America via television. We have Sodom and Gomorrah in the living rooms of America. And, what used to amaze us now amuses us. We literally laugh and get our jollies and our entertainment from sin, and the Bible says that *“fools make a mock of sin.”* (Proverbs 14:9) A generation is on its last legs when it begins to laugh and mock at sin and when it begins to laugh and mock at holy things, and we, in America, are doing just that. Someone said a long time ago, “He that falls into sin is a man. He who grieves at sin is a saint. He that boasts of sin is a devil.” We have a generation today that struts, sticks out its chest, concerning sin. As a matter of fact, if Hollywood wants to get a movie to sell, what do they do? They advertise it as shocking, sexy, sinful. That’s about the only time you will hear the word *sin*. Now, we need to be able to deal with sin. And, how does our generation deal with sin?

### **A. Evolution Is Not the Answer to Sin**

Well, if you’re an evolutionist, you say, “Time will take care of it”—that sin is, as I said a while back, just sort of a hiccup on the road to progress. It’s just simply a stumble upward. That is, man is the sum total of his genes and chromosomes plus environment and chance. And so, he is not to be blamed; he’s only to be pitied. He is like a computer that is programmed a certain way and, therefore, it reacts a certain way. Well, I reject evolution. I hope you do. I don’t reject it merely on religious grounds, spiritual grounds, biblical grounds—I do reject it for that. I reject it on intellectual grounds, also. You can believe you’re an orphan of the apes if you want and have King Kong for a cousin. That’s your business. You ought to know your kin folks better than I do. But, there are people who believe that evolution will just simply take care of sin.

### **B. Education Is Not the Answer to Sin**

Others believe that education will take care of sin: all we need is more knowledge. And,

that's the going merchandise in America today. These kids in America—they need to be educated about safe sex. They need to be educated about AIDS. They need to be educated. We have a generation that knows more about sex and is living in more sin than any generation that ever lived in history. It's not education, my dear friend. Nazi Germany was educated, and that education alone, without Jesus Christ, led to the gas ovens. And, education is not the answer.

### **C. Science Is Not the Answer to Sin**

Scientists, perhaps, tell us that through science and chemical engineering and genetic engineering that we can just cure man's defective genes. The problem, again, is not in the genes and the chromosomes; the problem is in the heart.

### **D. Sociology Is Not the Answer to Sin**

And then, you get the sociologists. When I was in college, the most liberal course I took was in sociology. And, they have the idea that if you can change man's environment, then you can deal with the problem of sin. I know that environment is good, and I want everybody to have a better environment; and I believe in environment. But friend, if environment is the answer, let me tell you—where did man get in trouble? In the Garden of Eden. You won't have a better environment than that, and that's where man got in trouble. Environment alone is not the answer.

### **E. Psychology Is Not the Answer to Sin**

And, the psychiatrists and the psychologists—they try to deal with sin by removing the pain and never dealing with the infection. They say that guilt is the feeling that you have when you do wrong. Guilt is not the feeling you have when you do wrong; guilt is what gives you the feeling that you do wrong, but the feeling is only the symptom of the sickness, which is guilt. And, guilt is not the feeling; it is a disease that has ravaged mankind. Now, God gives the one remedy—the one remedy—and it says here in 1 John 1:9: *"If we confess our sins..."* (1 John 1:9)

## **II. What Is a True Confession?**

Now, what is a true confession? There's a difference between admitting your sin and confessing your sin. May I say that most people do not know the difference? And, it is the object and the aim of this message tonight to show you the difference between admitting sin and confessing sin. And, we're going to go to the Bible tonight, and we're going to go through the Word of God. And, I'm going to show you several instances in the Word of God where certain individuals admitted their sin but it was not a true confession.

### **A. The Horrified Confession of Pharaoh**

For example, turn, if you will, to Exodus chapter 9. And, you might as well just lick your



fingers now tonight, and let's look tonight in these scriptures because we're going to turn to them together. Exodus chapter 9 and verse 27—these are the words of Pharaoh so long ago in the Word of God: *“And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned”*—do you see it?—*“I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.”* (Exodus 9:27) Now, that sounds like a good confession, but it wasn't a good confession. It's what I want to call a “horrificed confession.”

When did Pharaoh say that he had sinned? When he was stricken with terror and horror. If you want to find how good this confession was, find the circumstances of this confession. Go back and look in verses 22–26, and see what happened: *“And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in...the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.”* (Exodus 9:22–26) And then, verse 27: and Pharaoh says, *“I have sinned.”* (Exodus 9:27)

When did he say this? When did he make this counterfeit confession? When the thunder was rolling, and the lightning was flashing, and the hail was falling, and everything was going down or going up and being swept away by fire, wind, hail, and storm, then he comes to Moses, the man of God, and says, *“I have sinned.”* (Exodus 9:27) Was it a true confession? Well, look in Exodus 9:34 and see what happened there: *“And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.”* (Exodus 9:34) The repentance, so-called, that was born in the storm died in the calm. What his confession was, was not a true confession; it was a horrificed confession. I mean, it was a confession that was made when he was afraid of what was about to happen, and he's trying to get out of trouble. He's not convicted about what his sin is doing to God or what his sin is doing to others; he is convicted about what may happen to him. He's simply trying to save his own skin, his own desire.

Many a person has made a promise to God on an airplane when they were in rough weather: “O God, if you'll get me off of this airplane, let me land safely, I'll serve you.” But, no sooner are you back in the airport feeling safe again than you've forgotten what you've said. Many a time when your child was sick, you got on your knees by the child's bedside and said, “O please, God, spare the life of my baby. O God, spare the life of my

child, and God, if you will, I'll serve you." Many a soldier on the battlefield in a foxhole has made solemn promises to God when there was, as it were, lightning and hail and thunder. He's saying, "O God, O God, please, please. I have sinned. Have mercy upon me." But, it's simply foxhole religion.

I cannot tell you how many people I have dealt with when their home was on the rocks. They've come to me—and especially men—blubbering and crying, saying, "My wife is gone. My children are gone. Pastor, pray for me. It's my fault. I have sinned." I remember one young man who came to see me. You have never seen what, seemingly, was a more broken young man in your life—a young business executive. He came and sat down with me and said, "Thus and thus and thus have I done. I have sinned. And, my wife is gone, and my babies are gone. And, I love them, and it is my fault. And, I'm sorry. Pray for me. Call my wife. Counsel with her. Help me, please." I did. And, no sooner was that home back together than that man was right back in his rotten, filthy sin, just like Pharaoh of old.

Now, when the Bible says, "*If we confess our sins,*" (1 John 1:9) it doesn't mean to admit our sin. Pharaoh admitted his sin, but he did not confess his sin. His sin was not a true confession. And, may I say this, my dear friend: if you do what Pharaoh did, you will harden your heart against God. Unbroken vows harden the heart like few things. The Bible says here that Pharaoh's heart was hardened as a result. Look in verse 34 of this same chapter. The Bible says, "*And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart.*" (Exodus 9:34) Don't play games with God. There's the horrified confession of Pharaoh.

### **B. The Hypocritical Confession of Balaam**

Then, I want you to turn, if you will, please, next, to Numbers chapter 22. Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers. Turn to it in the Word of God, and look with me in verse 34—Numbers chapter 22 and verse 34: "*And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned*"—exactly, precisely the same words that Pharaoh said—"I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again." (Numbers 22:34) Now, what is all of this about?

One of the strangest characters in all of the Old Testament was a man named Balaam. He was a preacher, a prophet of God, of a sort, but I think he was a hypocrite. He was an eloquent man, and in some way, he had contact with God. As a matter of fact, some of the most beautiful prophecies in the Bible came out of the mouth of Balaam. Balaam knew the ways of God to some degree. He was familiar with the things of God to some degree. And, there was a king whose name was Balak, and Balak was the king of Moab. And, Balak was afraid of the children of Israel because he knew that God had His hand upon them. And, Balak somehow saw that Balaam was a man who might be open to some sort of a spiritual, religious bribe so Balak came to Balaam and

said, “Balaam, if you will curse the children of Israel, I’ll pay you handsomely.” Now, Balaam knew God, and he knew that he could not curse the children of Israel. He was not that bold and not that arrogant. But, he said to the King of Moab—he said, “I can’t do that. That would be impossible.” But, at the same time, he had this itch, this greed. He wanted the pay. And so, what he said is this: “Now, if you’ll pay me, while I will not curse them, I’ll tell you what can happen. I’ll give you some advice, and if you’ll follow my advice, they will curse themselves. All you need to do is to get them to fall into sin.” And, he gave him some diabolical advice about getting pagan, sensuous women to go and flirt with the men of Israel so that the men of Israel might commit fornication and the man of Israel might commit adultery. And, Balaam said, “When they do that, I won’t have to curse them; they will curse themselves, and God will judge them.”

Now, it’s an unusual thing. Here was a man who knew God. He knew the ways of God. He had the voice of an angel and the heart of a devil. Put it down big, plain, and straight: he was working both sides of the street. And yet, he comes to God when God stands in his way, and he sees the angel of God. And, he feels that he’s going to be in danger, and he says, “[Well,] *I have sinned*”—“*I have sinned*.” (Numbers 22:34) Again, it was an admission of sin but not a confession of sin. It was not a true confession; it was a counterfeit confession, and I’ll tell you why: because if Pharaoh’s confession was a horrified confession, this is a hypocritical confession. I mean, he is a double-minded man.

We have a lot of people like that—Balaamites—in our churches. They sit in our church on Sunday morning and praise the Lord and then go out on Monday to strike up a deal with Balak. They’re working both sides of the fence. Somebody said, “They’re praising God on Sunday, but they’ll be all right on Monday. It’s just a little habit they’ve acquired.” And, they come, and they sit in church; and they act religious, and they sing these songs. But, they are double-minded in all of their ways. May I tell you, my dear friend, the Bible says, “*A double minded man is unstable in all [of] his ways.*” (James 1:8) And, the Bible says, “Beware against sin that wars against the soul, the psyche.” (1 Peter 2:11)

Did you know that, if you are a hypocrite, that you’re a candidate for mental problems? Did you know that? Let me show you something in 2 Peter chapter 2 and verse 15: “*[They] have forsaken the right way, and...gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness*”—that is, he wanted the money that Balak was going to pay him—“*But*”—now, notice—“*was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass*”—that is, “the jackass” or “the donkey”—“*speaking with man’s voice forbad*”—now, notice this next phrase—“*the madness of the prophet*” (2 Peter 2:15–16)—“the insanity of the prophet.” “*A double minded man is unstable in all [of] his ways.*” (James 1:8)

Friend, you cannot have one foot in the world and one foot in the church and expect to live a life of peace. In some ways, it would almost be better for you to be out-and-out for the devil than it would be trying to serve the Lord and serve the devil at the same time. That's what happened to Balaam, and he said, *"I have sinned."* (Numbers 22:34) He's like so many people who come to confession in their churches, or they make some confession or rededicate their life, but they have no idea of changing. *"[They love] the wages of unrighteousness."* (2 Peter 2:15)

Is that true about you, teenager? You sit in the choir on Sunday morning and then commit fornication in the back seat of an automobile on Friday night. Do you think that God doesn't see that? Do you think that when you say, "Now God, forgive my sin. I have sinned," and then you continue the same way, do you think that God doesn't know that you're a hypocrite? You're a miserable person. I pity you. You don't have enough courage to serve the devil out-and-out, and you don't have enough grace to serve God out-and-out. *"A double minded man is unstable in all [of] his ways."* (James 1:8) And, you can get down on your knees and say, "Now God, I have sinned. I have sinned. I have sinned, and you said, *'If we confess our [sin], [you're] faithful and just to forgive us our [sin].'*" (1 John 1:9) My dear friend, to admit your sin and confess your sin are two different things. Here was a man who admitted his sin, but his sin still found lodging and residence in his heart.

### **C. The Half-Hearted Confession of Saul**

There's a third man who said the same thing. I want you to turn now, fast-forward, to 1 Samuel chapter 15 with me, if you will, in the Word of God. And, we're just going forward through the Word of God. First Samuel chapter 15—this is the story of man named Saul. If there was ever a man who had a better beginning and a more tragic ending than Saul, I don't know who he might have been. Saul was a handsome, wise, congenial leadership type of man—tall in stature, well trained—but he fell into terrible, horrible sin. And look, if you will, in 1 Samuel chapter 15 and verse 24: *"And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned"*—exactly the words that Pharaoh said; exactly the words the Balaam said. And now, Saul is saying these words—*"I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD."* (1 Samuel 15:24–25)

Now, what was wrong with his confession? It sounds good. But, if Pharaoh's confession was a horrified confession, if Balaam's confession was a hypocritical confession, Saul's confession was a halfhearted confession—a halfhearted confession. What I mean by that—it was a confession with an alibi. Saul never really felt guilty. He had an excuse for his sin. He had an explanation for his sin. You see, what God had told Saul is this: "I want you to utterly destroy the Amalekites." The Amalekites were a

banded race that rode roughshod over the people of that time. They were killing, mutilating, raping, murdering, torturing, vandalizing. They were like a cancer on the globe, and God had commanded that they be exterminated—not only they, but all of the cattle, and all of the sheep, all of the oxen. God said, “I want it all destroyed.” And, Samuel the prophet comes to King Saul, whose responsibility it was, and said, “Saul, did you do what God commanded you to do?” Saul said, “Yes, I’ve done exactly what God commanded me to do,” and Samuel said, “Well, now Saul, if you’ve done that, what is the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen that I hear—all of these animals here?” Well, Saul said, “I saved those. Now, I know that God said to destroy them, but that did not seem to me to be wise. It didn’t seem to be prudent. It didn’t seem to be economical. What I did, Samuel, is this: I saved them to sacrifice them to God.” Now, do you see what he was doing? He was giving an explanation. He was giving an alibi. He was giving an excuse. He was saying, “Now, I’m not really all that bad. I did it. I admit I did it, but wait ’till you hear my side of it.”

Many people sin with an alibi, sin with an excuse: “Oh, yes, I’ve left my wife, and I’m sleeping with another woman. But, you see, my wife has not been giving me the love and the affection that is due to me.” “Oh, yes, I know that I nag my husband, but if you knew the way he lived around the house, you would nag him, too.” “Oh, yes, I know I drink, but if you had to live with that nagging woman, you’d drink, too.” Adam blamed Eve; Eve blamed the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Aaron, who was the brother of Moses, made a golden calf. When he made a golden calf, the people came and worshipped the golden calf. Moses came down from the mountaintop and said, “Aaron, what have you done?” “Well,” he said, “the people’s heart was bent on mischief. And, I just put the gold in the fire, and out came this calf. It’s not really my fault.” (Exodus 32:23)

I mean, here was an alibi and an excuse. And, my friend, listen: there is one thing that God will always forgive, and it is sin when it is properly confessed. There’s one thing that God never forgives, and that is an alibi. He never forgives an alibi. You see, put away your excuses. Put away your alibis. When you have sinned against God, there must be utter, absolute honesty and brokenness before God. Halfhearted confession is the worst kind of confession. It is not a true confession, and it does not get sin forgiven.

#### **D. The Hemmed-Up Confession of Achan**

Now, I want you to turn to the book of Joshua now—just keep on going—and look, if you will, in Joshua chapter 7 and verse 20: “*And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned.*” (Joshua 7:20) Exactly what Pharaoh said; exactly what Balaam said; exactly what Saul said. And now, Achan says, “*I have sinned.*” (Joshua 7:20)

Well, who was Achan? Achan was a warrior, and there had been a battle. The children of Israel had come up against mighty Jericho. Great in antiquity, great in

iniquity, great in enormity was the city of Jericho. You remember the story. God said, “You march around the walls seven times—on the seventh day, seven times—and give a great shout and the walls will come down.” And, God says, “I have given the city into your hand.” But, God said, “Everything—all of the booty of the battle; the gold, the silver, the iron, the brass is to be put into the treasury of the Lord.” (Joshua 6:19) But, if you read Joshua chapter 7, you’ll find out there was a man named Achan, who was a soldier, who *“took of the accursed thing”* (Joshua 7:1) and hid it in his tent. He took two hundred shekels of silver, a wedge of gold, a Babylonian garment, dug a hole in the midst of his tent, put the spoils of the battle down there, smoothed out the dirt, and thought that he’d hidden his sin from God. From that moment on, there was sin in the camp and there was no more victory for the people of Israel. And, they went up against a small, insignificant little city named Ai, and they were ignominiously and disgracefully defeated because there was sin in the camp. Joshua gets on his face before God, and Joshua says, “O God, why have you let this happen to your people? God, why have you done this? Why this disgrace?” (Joshua 7:8–9) God said to Joshua, “Joshua, get up off your face. Israel has sinned.” (Joshua 7:10–11) That is, “Joshua, all of your pleading, all of your whining, all of your questioning—that’s not going to do any good. Joshua, there is sin in the camp.” And, what God is teaching us is that prayer is never a smokescreen in which we can hide our sin. “Joshua, get up. There’s sin in the camp, and you need to root it out and ferret it out.”

Now, what they did is this: that God the Holy Spirit led them in the casting of lots and the putting of the finger on the right man. So, families, tribe by tribe, they were taken—division and family. And finally, they come to this man Achan, and God the Holy Spirit fingered this man Achan. And, God said, “This is the one who has done thus and such.” Now, all of this time he’s stonewalled God. All of this time he’s let Joshua go through all of this process to try to narrow down who is the sinner and what he has done. And finally, Joshua knows that it is Achan, and Joshua says to him, *“My son, give...glory to...God...and [confess] what [you have] done.”* (Joshua 7:19) And, Achan said, “Thus and thus have I done: I saw. I coveted. I took. I hid.” (Joshua 7:20–21) And then, Joshua said, “All right. Now, bring stones and stone him, and stone his family and all that he has, and burn them with fire,” and that was after he said, *“I have sinned.”* (Joshua 7:20) Now, what kind of a confession was this? It was a confession when it was too late. It was a confession when the hammer had fallen. It was a confession when the net had closed. It was a confession when the gavel had fallen. It was a confession that was too late. It was a hemmed-up confession—a hemmed-up confession.

You know, there are people, when they finally get caught—when a Magic Johnson says, “I have AIDS”—everybody says, “Wasn’t that wonderful that he confessed it?” What else could he do? What else could he do? He’s hemmed up. Oh, I guess he could

have denied it to some degree, but only for a while. He's hemmed up—he's hemmed up. You think I'm hardhearted. I'm not hardhearted. But, I'm trying to say, my dear friend, there are a lot of people—they wait until they get into a corner and they wait until there's nowhere else to go, and then they confess. But, it is not a true confession; it is a hemmed-up confession, and there's no mercy there.

Did you know that every one of us will confess to God our sin one day at the Judgment? But, there'll be no mercy there; there'll be no forgiveness there because judgment has begun. *"As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So [now] then every one of us shall give [an] account of himself [unto] God."* (Romans 14:11–12) And, one day you will face your sin, and one day you will confess your sin; but it will be at the Judgment. It will be too late.

When I was a little boy, we used to live on Florida Avenue in West Palm Beach, Florida. That was back when I was in first, second, and third grade—really, before I even started school. One day, before I'd even started school, I was out there playing in the street, and my mother had said, "Adrian, do not play in the street. If you do play in the street"—Florida Avenue, which was...a lot of cars went past—"you will be punished." Well, I was not an obedient son, and I was playing in the street. And, my elder brother, who is a tattletale and a talebearer—shall I say, "ratfink"—went to my mother and told my mother, "Adrian is playing in the street." Now, I heard him tell my mother, and I heard my mother tell my father, "Adrian has been playing in the street." I ran and I hid because I knew that I was due judgment and I knew in our family it was swift, sure, certain, and painful. So, I went to hide. We lived in a two-story house. I went up the back stairs, up the stairwell, and there was a bedroom to this side and a bedroom to that side. I went to the bedroom on the left-hand side. There was a big bed, and I went under the bed. I heard my dad's voice: "Adrian!" I didn't answer. "Adrian!" I didn't answer. "Buddy, do you know where Adrian is?" "No, sir." "Well, he's bound to be in this house somewhere." And, I heard my dad's footfalls go all over the house downstairs. I'm under the bed upstairs. *Boom, boom, boom, boom*—my heart is beating.

Then, I heard my dad coming up the stairs, and I heard my dad go in the bedroom over here. I heard him open every closet door. I heard him as he said, "Look under the bed." He looked under the bed in that room. Then, I heard him as he stopped past the middle bath and looked in there. And then, I heard his hand on the doorknob coming into the bedroom where I was. Do you know what this preschooler did? I came out from underneath the bed and brushed off the dust, and I said, "Dad, I need to talk with you." I said, "Dad, do you remember when you told us that, if we ever did anything wrong, that if we would come to you and if we would confess it and we were truly sorry, that you wouldn't punish us? Do you remember that, Dad? Well, Dad, I want to tell you I was out playing in the street, and thus and thus have I done." My dear friend, I got one of the



worst whippings I ever got. My dad had no mercy. What was wrong? Well, you know exactly what was wrong: here I was waiting until there was no way out, no possible hope. Judgment was coming. There's no doubt he would look under that bed, and there's that little kid there. I wasn't brokenhearted that I'd disobeyed my dad. I really wasn't even seriously concerned about the danger of a child playing in the road. I just didn't want a whipping, and I felt that if I said, "Dad, I've done wrong," that somehow I could fool my dad. How much less would you fool your Heavenly Father.

Here's Achan. He comes now while the sin is on him and says, "This is the one." He says, "Yes, I've sinned," but he was stoned and he died because his was not a true confession.

### **E. The Hopeless Confession of Judas**

Now, I want us to turn to the New Testament this time. I want you to turn to the book of Matthew, the first book in the New Testament. And, I want you to look in Matthew chapter 27; well, let's begin in verse 3: "*Then Judas, which had betrayed him*"—that is, "which had betrayed Jesus"—"*when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders*"—now, watch it—"Saying, *I have sinned*"—same three words—"I have sinned in that I have betrayed...innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that." (Matthew 27:1–4) That is, "That's not our problem, Judas. That is your problem."

Now, if the confession of Achan was a hemmed-up confession, the confession of Judas was a hopeless confession. What Judas has here is not true conviction of sin; what he has here is remorse of sin. Judas never got forgiveness. He had crossed God's deadline. He went out and died a suicide. He hanged himself. Judas is in hell tonight. Jesus said of Judas, "*[It had been better] for that man [that] he had never been born.*" (Mark 14:21) He is called in the Bible, "*the son of perdition.*" (John 17:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:3) And yet, Judas, who betrayed Jesus Christ and sold Jesus Christ for thirty pieces of silver, is stricken so with remorse that he cries out the cries of a guilty conscience and says, "*I have sinned.*" (Matthew 27:4) But, he's not pardoned. He's not forgiven because it is not a true confession; it is a counterfeit confession.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said of this, the hopeless confession: "The man who has crossed the deadline," he said, "I've only seen it once. I hope never to see it again." You may so live in sin, my friend—you may so sin against God—that you can be so filled with remorse that you fill a suicide's grave. And, by the way, suicide never solves anything—never, never, never! But, that could happen to you. Friend, Judas was filled with remorse. He "*repented himself.*" (Matthew 27:3) That is, he changed his own mind, but it was not repentance toward God.

Now, I've gone through the Bible, and I've shown you individuals in the Bible who have said the exact same three words. Pharaoh said, "I have sinned," but his was a

horrified confession. Balaam said, “I have sinned,” but his was a hypocritical confession. Saul said, “I have sinned,” but his was a halfhearted confession. Achan said, “I have sinned,” but his was a hemmed-up confession. Judas said, “I have sinned,” but his was a hopeless confession. But now, go back to 1 John 1:9 and look at it: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John 1:9)

### III. What Is a True Confession?

What is a true confession? Well, look at it here—the Word of God. How do you deal with sin?

#### A. There Must Be Confession

Number one: by confession. And, the word here, *confess*, is a Greek word, *homologeō*—*homo* meaning “the same,” *logeō* meaning “to speak.” A confession is to say the same thing or to agree. Now, what it simply means is this: that I say about my sin what God says about my sin. A confession in a court of law and a confession before God are not the same. In a court of law, you may admit your sin. You may say, “Yes, I did it.” But, a Bible confession is literally a judgment of that sin. It is saying with God, “God, I see that sin as you see that sin. God, you hate that sin, and I hate that sin. God, you’re against that sin, and I’m against that sin.” Confessing your sin is not just saying, “Yes, Lord, I did it.” It is saying about that sin what God says about that sin. It is saying the same thing as God. It is coming to an agreement with God. It is getting on God’s side over against that sin. That’s what a confession is.

And, by the way, it says, *“If we confess our sins...”* (1 John 1:9) It doesn’t say, *“If we confess our [sin]...”* (1 John 1:9) Look at it—look at it: *“If we confess our sins...”* (1 John 1:9) You say, “What’s the difference?” Well, there are a lot of people who just want to confess their sin. They want to say, “Now Lord, forgive me my sin.” Friend, name it, nail it—your sins. “I lied. I lusted. I lost my temper. I was lazy. I was intemperate. I was proud.” Name it. Call it by name. Do you know what’s wrong with the average Baptist? He wants to sin retail and confess wholesale. We just think that some general admission of sin... And, sometimes we’re even so stupid as to say, “If I’ve sinned, forgive me.” That’s a travesty. You call that sin by its name. *“If we confess our sins...”* (1 John 1:9) Call it by name. You say, “Well, I just can’t remember it.” Well, it’s not your business to remember. You open yourself up to the Holy Spirit. He’ll show you. He’s the Holy Spirit of God. This same chapter says, *“If we [want] in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son [cleanses] us from all sin.”* (1 John 1:7) God will turn the searchlight of His holiness into your heart and into your life, and when He does, whether you deem it to be big or small, you call that sin by its name. Name it and nail it. Agree with God. And that, my dear

friend, is a confession of sin. And, don't alibi. Don't call it "a bad habit." There's no promise in the Bible for bad habits—just for sin. Don't excuse it.

### **B. There Must Be Confidence**

Now, first of all, there must be confession, and then there will be confidence. Look in chapter 2 of this same chapter. Look, if you will, in verses 1 and 2: *"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."* (1 John 2:1–2) Confession and confidence. If we sin, we have an advocate. You know what the word *advocate* is? That's just a fancy name for a lawyer. I have a lawyer to plead my case in heaven. His name is Jesus. Satan is the district attorney, the prosecuting attorney. He is *"the accuser of the brethren."* (Revelation 12:10) He's constantly pointing out my sin and my failure before God. And, I am guilty of failure before God and so are you. But, when I confess, when I come to the court of heaven and I say, "Thus and thus have I done. God, I agree with you. It was wrong. I judge it. I say the same thing as you say," then I have an advocate in the heavens, the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ the righteous. And, the Bible says, *"He is the propitiation for [my sin]."* (1 John 2:2)

You say, "Pastor, I haven't got the foggiest what that word means. I can hardly pronounce it, and I know I can't spell it." Well, look at it because it's a wonderful word, and you might as well learn what it means. *"He is the propitiation."* (1 John 2:2) In the Old Testament, this word is translated "Mercy Seat"—"Mercy Seat." There was in the Old Testament tabernacle a piece of furniture called the "ark," and on that ark was a slab of gold. And, on that slab of gold, the blood atonement—the blood—was poured out. And, it was there that God met with His people. And, that slab of gold was called the "Mercy Seat" or the "throne of grace," where God forgave sin. And, that Old Testament Mercy Seat is to them what Jesus Christ is to us. He is our propitiation. He is our Mercy Seat. The word *propitiation* literally means "satisfaction"—"satisfaction." *"He is the [satisfaction] for our sins."* (1 John 2:2)

God is not satisfied with your good intentions. God is not satisfied with your explanations. God is not satisfied with your alibis. God is not even satisfied with your tears of remorse. But, the blood of Jesus Christ satisfies the righteousness of a holy God. *"And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ... And he is the propitiation"*—He is the Mercy Seat; He is the satisfaction—*"for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."* (1 John 2:1–2) Hallelujah!

### **C. There Must Be Commitment**

Third thing and I'm finished: confession, confidence, and commitment. Begin to read now in verse 3: *"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his*

*commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him*”—“John, why don’t you say what you think? Why do you just beat around the bush like this?” Listen—“*He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*” (1 John 2:3–6)

What is a confession of sin? It is an agreement. It is an advocate. It is an abiding. It is a confession. It is a confidence. It is a commitment. Now, if you think that confession is some way that you can sow your wild oats six days a week and come to church on Sunday and pray for crop failure, you’ve got it wrong. Confession of sin is saying, “God, I am sick and tired of it. And Lord, I want to serve you. I want to live for you. I want to be clean. I want to be pure.”

Why do you serve God? Why do people serve? You know why a slave serves? Because he has to. Do you know why an employee serves? Because he needs to. Have you seen that bumper sticker, “I owe, I owe; it’s off to work I go”? A slave has to. An employee—he needs to. But, a son—he wants to, down in his heart. He has been forgiven. He has been cleansed. He’s free! And, he says, “O my God, I want to serve you.” And friend, when you see what sin is and what sin did to Jesus Christ... And, sin murdered Jesus; it nailed Him to the tree. And, what sin did to Jesus is an illustration of what sin will do to you unless you let Jesus cleanse you and forgive you.

## Conclusion

So, where should you place your faith? Place your faith where God placed your sin—on Jesus. “[And] if we confess our sins”—true confession, true confession, true confession—“if we confess our sins, [he’s] faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) And, “what God calls clean let no man call unclean.” (Acts 10:15) There’s no a stain, not a blot, not a blur, not a blemish that can ever come to the human soul but what the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, will not only forgive, but cleanse and wash whiter than snow.

Let’s bow in prayer. Father, I pray tonight that you would teach us what a true confession of sin is. And God, help us not to play games over our sin but, God, to deal honestly with you. And Lord, you’ll deal faithfully with us. In your holy name I pray. Amen.

# Birthmarks of the Believer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 18, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 2:3–11**

## Outline

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn to 1 John, find the second chapter, and find verse 4. And then, look up here, and let me tell you this: that *when you were Heaven-born, you became Heaven-bound*. But, when you were Heaven-born and Heaven-bound, God put some indelible marks upon you. These are traits of the twice-born. These are the birthmarks of the believer. And, God wants me to tell you that if you don't find these birthmarks, if you do not discover these traits, then you need to ask yourself, have you ever really been born from above, and are you really Heaven-bound? Because, you see, it's one thing to talk religion; it's another thing to have it. Is that not true?

As a matter of fact, let's just look here in the second chapter, and look, if you will, in verse 4. See how it begins? *"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar"* (1 John 2:4). Oh, my. John, you're certainly not...you're not very discreet there. I mean, you're a little blunt, aren't you, John? He says, "That's right. You say you know Him, and you don't keep His commandments—you're just a liar." And then, look again in verse 6: *"He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked"* (1 John 2:6). Look in verse 9: *"He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness until now"* (1 John 2:9). You see how each of

these verses begin? “He that saith... He that saith... He that saith...” It’s one thing to talk the talk; it’s another thing to walk the walk, isn’t it? “He that saith...”

Now, you see, a lot of us talk a good religion, but everything we say is not necessarily so. I heard of a psychiatrist who was in his office, and the nurse came back there and said, “Doctor, there’s a man out here in the office who wants to see you. He says he’s invisible.” And, the psychiatrist said to the nurse, “Go tell him we can’t see him.” Not everything that people say is true, and certainly when it comes to this matter of being saved.

But, what are some traits of the twice-born? Each of these phrases, “He that saith,” introduces a trait of the twice-born; it introduces a birthmark of the believer. So, I want us to look at these traits right here and see, first of all, what a true believer is.

## **I. A True Believer Submits to the Lordship of Jesus**

Number one: A true believer—are you listening?—a true believer submits to the Lordship of Jesus Christ—a true believer submits to the Lordship of Jesus. Look in verses 3 and 4: *“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him”* (1 John 2:3–4). Now, nobody can be saved without receiving Christ as Lord. The Bible says, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”* (Acts 16:31). 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”* (Romans 10:9). And so, you don’t receive Christ as Savior and later make Him Lord. You receive Him as Lord and Savior all at the same time. And so, if you say that Christ is your Lord, and yet you don’t keep His Word, that’s a contradiction. Jesus Christ Himself said, *“Why call [you] me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things [that] I say?”* (Luke 6:46). The Lord means Master, and He has every right to give His commandments.

So, let me ask you a question: Have you been born again? You say, “Yes, I have.” Are you keeping His commandments? “Well,” you say, “no, I don’t think I’m keeping His commandments.” Then, John says—not Adrian, but John—says you are a liar. *“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar”* (1 John 2:4). “Are you trying to tell me, Adrian, that I have to be perfect in order to go to Heaven?” No, if it demands perfection, nobody is going, because we don’t have perfection. What does this mean when it says, *“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar”* (1 John 2:4)? It’s all wrapped up in that word *keep*.

Now, what does that word *keep* mean? Well, first of all, it means “to guard,” as you would guard a treasure. You would say to somebody—you would give them

something—you would say, “Keep this for me.” And so, when you treasure God’s commandments, the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ, when they are precious to you, when you guard His commandments, you take and set value in those commandments. Then, you can say, “Perhaps I know the Lord,” or, “Yes, indeed, I do know the Lord.”

Also, the word *keep* is a word that was used by sailors in ancient times. They didn’t have global positioning satellites as we have. They would steer by the stars. And, a sailor, at nighttime, would look up to the stars, and he would steer by those stars. And, they called that “keeping the stars”—“keeping the stars.” That is, he would set his course by keeping the stars. Now, you, as a Christian, set your course in life by keeping the commandments. You treasure those commandments, and you steer by those commandments. That doesn’t mean that you could never get blown off-course. That doesn’t mean in a time of carelessness you may take your eyes from the stars. But, I’m here to tell you this, folks: that if you have no desire to live by the Word of God, if you can sin carelessly, flippantly, without any compunction, without any conviction, and you just go your merry way and let God’s commandments go the other way, you need to get saved. I didn’t say that; the Apostle John said that. *“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is”—what?—“a liar”* (1 John 2:4). Now, are you steering by God’s stars? Do you treasure God’s Word? Are you keeping God’s commandments?

Now, why do we do this? Listen very carefully: we are not saved by keeping the commandments. He’s not teaching, here, salvation by works at all. Look, if you will, in verse 4—look at it: *“He that saith, I know him”* (1 John 2:4). Now that, friend, is in the perfect tense. Now, you say, “Oh Adrian, I’m so blessed.” No, all right, here’s what it says: it speaks of something that is done in the past-perfect tense: “He that saith, I have known Him...I know Him.” That’s in the past tense. It is something that is done and settled. And then, because “he keepeth commandments because he is now keeping”—that is present tense. Now, what is he talking about? He is saying, “Because I have known Him, I am now keeping the commandments.” It doesn’t say, “Because I am keeping the commandments, I know Him.” Don’t get it backward. The only way that you can keep the commandments is to know Him. But, if you know Him, if you have Him in your heart, if you have known Him (perfect tense), you will be keeping this commandments (present tense). You’re going to be steering by God’s stars. You’re going to be treasuring God’s Word.

Now, ask yourself this question, and ask it honestly; ask it sincerely: Do you have in your heart, right now, a desire to live by the Word of God? If not, put a big question mark over that thing you call “salvation.” *“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his*



*commandments, is a liar*" (1 John 2:4). That's what John says.

And so, what's the first trait of the twice-born? It is, folks, right here: a true believer submits to the Lordship of Christ. He has His Word. He says, "This is what I want you to do." And, if Jesus Christ is not Lord of your life, then you're not on the road to Heaven. You see, this is not legalism; this is love. Do you know why I keep the commandments of Jesus? Because I love Him. Let me give you some verses. Jesus said in John chapter 14, verse 15: *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"* (John 14:15). He says in John 14, verse 21: *"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me"* (John 14:21). You see, if you don't keep His commandments, you don't really love Him, and if you don't love Him, you're not saved.

I don't keep the commandments in order to be saved. When our children were little, Joyce and I wouldn't wake up in the morning and say, "Well, what time is it?" "It's 8:00." "Well, time for breakfast. We'd better get the kids now. We feed them, because, Joyce, you know, if we don't feed the kids, they're going to come and arrest us for child abuse, so we have to feed the kids." No, that's not why we fed them—not because the law says so. The law does say that you can't abuse your children, but that's not why we feed our children. We feed them because we love them. We keep God's commandments because we love them. Jesus says, *"If a man love me, he will keep my [word]"* (John 14:23).

## **II. A True Believer Seeks the Lifestyle of Jesus**

Now, let me give you a second trait of the twice-born. First of all, a person who is twice-born submits to the Lordship of Christ; he keeps His Word. Jesus said, *"Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things [that] I say?"* (Luke 6:46). Number two: Not only does a true believer submit to the Lordship of Jesus, but a true believer seeks the lifestyle of Jesus. Now, look in verse 5—look at it: *"But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked"* (1 John 2:5–6). Now, here, he's not talking about His Lordship, but His lifestyle. You see, you submit to His Lordship, and you seek His lifestyle. You are to walk as Jesus walked.

Now folks, if what you call being saved doesn't make you like Jesus, you haven't been saved. Being saved makes you like Jesus. It makes you to walk as Jesus walked. Look in verse 6: the key is *"he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he"*—now, underscore that phrase—*"even as he"* (1 John 2:6). That is, my life is to be even as His life was. First John 4, verse 17—you might turn to it and look at it. The last part of that verse says, *"As he is, so are we in this world"* (1 John 4:17). *"Even as He"* (1 John 2:6). *"As he is, so are we in this world"* (1 John 4:17). Now, what was the

lifestyle of the Lord Jesus Christ like? How am I going to walk as Jesus walked?

#### A. **A Life of Honesty**

Well, His lifestyle was a life of honesty. Go back to 1 John 1, verse 7, and look at it. You're going to pick up this phrase: *"even as he"* (1 John 2:6). *"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another"* (1 John 1:7). Well, what does it mean to walk in the light? It means to be honest. Go back to verse 6—chapter 1, verse 6: *"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth"* (1 John 1:6). So, what is the lifestyle of Jesus? It's a life of honesty. I'm honest with God. I'm honest with myself. I'm honest with you. If you have a life that is built on dishonesty, you're not walking as Jesus walked and you're not walking in the light. And, if you're not walking in the light, you have no right to call yourself a child of God.

#### B. **A Life of Purity**

But, not only a life of honesty, but a life of purity. Look in 1 John chapter 3, verse 3: *"every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure"* (1 John 3:3). Now, don't miss the phrase; the phrase I'm working on in all of these is *"even as he"*—*"even as he"* (1 John 2:6). *"As he is, so are we"* (1 John 4:17). We ought to walk even as He walked, as He did this. My life is to have the lifestyle of Jesus. His lifestyle was a lifestyle of honesty. His lifestyle is a lifestyle of purity. *"Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure"* (1 John 3:3).

Now, if you are feeding on filth, if you are a lover of pornography, if your heart is full of filth, and dirt, and debauchery, don't call yourself a child of God. You can't live that way and be saved—you just can't do it. You need to get saved if this is the way you are. Now, I'm not saying that you cannot slip into sin. (We'll deal with that later on in this series of messages.) But, if this is your lifestyle, if this is the way you live, you're not walking as Jesus walked. Can you imagine Jesus watching some of the things that people watch today when they tune in on the television and **Hell's Box Office**, and see all this filth that comes in there? And, they feed and feast on that and let their little kids... You know what I feel like telling those folks? "Hey, turn that thing off, and get saved—get saved. I mean, why are you watching that filth? Would you sit there if Jesus were there with you and watch it—I mean, if Jesus were sitting in your living room?" Listen, Jesus's life was a life of honesty. He walked in the light. Jesus's life—a life of purity. The Bible says, *"even as he is pure"* (1 John 3:3).

#### C. **A Life of Righteousness**

And, His life was a life of righteousness. Look, if you will, in 1 John 3, verse 7: *"Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as*

*he*”—here it is again—“*even as he is righteous*” (1 John 3:7). You see, Jesus is honest. Jesus is pure. Jesus is righteous. And, what is righteousness? Righteousness is not merely the act, the abstaining, from doing what is wrong. It is said of the Lord Jesus Christ that He went about doing good. “Now,” you say, “Pastor, how can I have the lifestyle of Jesus? When I submit to the Lordship of Jesus, how do I seek the lifestyle of Jesus?” Well, the key is in verse 6, and there in verse 6—look at it—He mentions abiding. Do you see it? “*He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked*” (1 John 2:6). Jesus was a master teacher.

Now, most of us have a little fuzziness when it comes to abiding. We say, “Well, Pastor, what does it mean to abide?” Well, one thing about Jesus is this: He was so easy to understand if you listen to Him. He took those difficult phrases and terms, and He made them simple. And, He says in John chapter 15—we’re in 1 John now, but in the Gospel of John, and chapter 15—Jesus tells us what abiding is. He says it’s like a vine and a branch. He says, “*I am the vine, [you’re] the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing*” (John 15:5). So, now we understand what it means to abide: it’s to have the relationship to Jesus Christ that a branch and a grapevine has to the main stem—in the grapevine. “*I am the vine*”—Jesus said—“*ye are the branches*” (John 15:5).

And so, how do I, if I’m going to walk and live the lifestyle of Jesus, how do I abide in Jesus? Well, just think—just imagine yourself—now as the branch, and Jesus is the vine.

#### **D. A Life of Reliance**

First of all, the life of a branch is a life of full reliance. That branch completely, totally relies on the vine. The branch can do nothing of itself. All that the branch needs is in the vine. And so, the branch clings to the vine, grows out from the vine, and it receives whatever it needs. In the summertime, if it needs moisture, the vine gives moisture. In the Fall, when it’s time for the grapes—or in the Spring, when it’s time to begin to produce the grapes—the little branch doesn’t worry about how many grapes, what size, what color, how sweet. That’s none of the branch’s business. All the branch does is just abide in the vine. You see, the branch does not produce the grapes; the branch only bears the grapes. And, all that the branch does is just simply relinquishes everything to the vine. It is a life of reliance. It is a life of relinquishment. It just draws from the vine.

People could not understand the life of Jesus. They said to Jesus, “How do you do these things? How do you do these works?” Now, Jesus came here as a man to live before us as men; and so, He set the example of abiding. And, Jesus said, “I’m not doing this. The Father does it. What the Father says, I say. What I see the Father do, I

do” (John 5:19). Jesus is abiding in the Father, and you’re seeing the life of God reproduced in the human Jesus here upon this earth.

### E. **A Life of Relinquishment**

Now, what is abiding? It is a life of absolute dependence, complete relinquishment. A branch has no other side issues. It clings completely to the vine. It rests in the vine, and the life of the vine comes into the branch. Now folks, if you’re going to have a lifestyle of the Lord Jesus Christ, you’re going to have to abide in Him. And, when you abide in Him, when you are to Jesus what Jesus was to the Father, Jesus will be to you what the Father was to Jesus. You just simply abide in Him.

Now folks, are you listening? Listen to me—listen to me now. *“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is liar”* (1 John 2:4). There is, friend, a submission to the Lordship of Christ, and there is a seeking of the lifestyle of Christ. *“He that saith, I know him, and doesn’t walk, ought also himself to walk as Jesus walked”* (1 John 2:6).

Now, there was a man who wrote a novel called **IN HIS STEPS**, and the theme of that novel is a lot of people in a particular town got the idea that they would ask themselves this question before they took any course of action: What would Jesus do? And, there’s been a revival of that book lately, and you see a lot of kids and adults wearing a little bracelet—“W.W.J.D.” Have you seen that little bracelet? It means “What Would Jesus Do?” And so, they ask themselves, in any situation, “What would Jesus do?” And, I think that is wonderful. But, let me just put a little caveat here and help you a little bit when we’re talking about the lifestyle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **1. What Would Jesus Do? That Assumes You Know What Jesus Would Do**

Number one: When you ask yourself, “What would Jesus do?” in any situation, that assumes you know what Jesus would do. You know, Jesus will surprise you. As a matter of fact, Jesus will often do what you would not think He would do. You can’t put Jesus in a box and just run Him through the grid of your own rationalism. So, when you ask, “What would Jesus do?”, that presumes that you know what He would do, and you may not.

#### **2. What Would Jesus Do? That Presumes You Could Do It**

Number two: That also presumes that if you knew what Jesus would do, you could do it. Do you think you could? Just all you have to do is know what Jesus would do. *Now, I can come to the plate, and I can take a bat in my hand and see that baseball coming at me at 100 miles an hour, and I ask myself, “What would Mark McGuire do?” So, what’s that got to do with it? I mean, even if I knew what Mark McGuire would do, do you think I could do it? No!*

### 3. What Would Jesus Do? Jesus Is Here, Living Inside You

Now, here's the third thing: look, we ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do if He were here?" Brother Joe, He is here: He is alive in us. And, we need to let the Jesus in us be Jesus. He's the One who knows what He would do, and He's the One who can do it. And, living the Christian life is a life of supernatural reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ. *There's only one person who has ever lived the Christian life, and His name is Jesus.* And, if He lives it in your house, it'll be Him in you still living it. You see, you walk as He walked because you abide in Him—in verse 6 (1 John 2:6).

### III. A True Believer Shows the Love of Jesus

Now, here's the third mark of the believer—here's the third birthmark. Are you following me? The first one is, you submit to His Lordship. The second is, you seek His lifestyle. The third is, you show His love—you show His love. Look, if you will now, in verse 9: *"He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him"* (1 John 2:9–10). Now, that's the third birthmark of the believer: you just simply share His love.

Now, notice, if you will, he says this love is both new and old. Well, why is it both new and old? Well, it's old because Jesus said love is *"the first and [the] great commandment"* (Matthew 22:38), so it goes all the way back to the Old Testament. But, why is it new? Well, I'll tell you why it's new: because Jesus says over there in John chapter 13: *"A new commandment I give [to] you, That ye love one another; [even] as I have loved you"* (John 13:34). And, do you know when He said that in John 13, you know what He'd been doing? He'd been washing His disciples' feet. They had come into the upper room. Just last week, I was in Israel, and we went to the upper room. And, there in the upper room, the disciples were sitting at the table, and Jesus took off His garments, put a towel around Him, took the sandals off those old, smelly feet of those disciples, and Jesus washed His disciples' feet. And then, Jesus said, *"A new commandment I give...you...as I have loved you, [you are to] love one another"* (John 13:34).

Now folks, do you know who was in that room? Do you think they were lovely? Do you think old, big-mouth Peter was lovely? Peter—he just opened his mouth to change feet. Peter was a braggart, crude, arrogant. Who else was in that room? James and John. You know what they were called? "Sons of thunder." They had a hair-trigger temper. They got in Samaria, and they said, "Lord, let's nuke 'em—these Samaritans. A little heavenly napalm will do them good. Let's call down fire from Heaven" (Luke 9:54). That's James and John. Who else was in that room? Simon the Zealot. You talk about a

right-winger! Brother, this guy knew nothing but hatred for the Romans before Jesus Christ got hold of him. Who was in that room? Andrew was in that room—Andrew, who was quiet and sensitive. Who was in that room there? Well, Philip was in there. He was calculating. Who was in that room? Cynical Thomas was in that room. And, Jesus loved them. Let me tell you something, folks: He doesn't love us because we're lovely; He just loves us. And, look around in this room. You think we're all so loveable? You're sitting between two people. You know, they say only one out of every three people is beautiful or handsome. Look on either side. If it's not them, it's you.

Folks, listen—listen—how do I know that I know Him? If I say that I love Him, know Him, and don't have love—don't love my brother, if I hate my brother—He says I'm a liar. The truth is not in us.

## Conclusion

What are the birthmarks of the believer? We submit to His Lordship. We seek His lifestyle. We share His love. That's it—that's it. Now, if these things are not there, don't call yourself a Christian.

I was in Israel last week. I went to the Holocaust Museum. My heart broke. I've been there before, but never was I as deeply moved as I saw the atrocities that were committed upon the Jewish people. Now, if there's a Jewish friend watching this program right now, I want to tell you, in the name of Jesus, I am so sorry for what has happened. I wanted to take every Jew in the world, and put my arm around them, and just say, "I am so sorry. I am ashamed." Some of those who were doing that came from a "Christian" nation. That was not Jesus. That was somebody saying, "I know Him," but the Apostle John says, "They are in darkness and lie." And, never hold that against Jesus Christ. It wasn't Jesus. It was some liar who said, "I know Him." Listen, folks, I am telling you the truth.

You listen to me—you listen to me. Friend, if a person is saved, it's going to show in his life. You're not saved by keeping the commandments. You're not saved by walking as Jesus walked. You're not saved by loving your brother. But, if you are saved, you will do these things. They come out of your life that has met the Lord Jesus. And, *if your religion hasn't changed your life, you'd better change your religion*, because you don't have the New Testament kind. *"If any man [is] in Christ [Jesus], he is a new creature"* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Let's bow together in prayer. Lord God, I pray that You'll help us to make our walk match our talk, and Lord, that we might not say one thing and do another.

Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, how do you know the Lord? Well, you know Him by faith. You trust Him as your Lord and Savior by faith. And, if you'd like

to trust Him today, you can do it right now, if you'll just bow your head in prayer and pray a prayer like this, sincerely, out of your heart: "Dear God, I know that You love me"—and friend, He does love you—"Dear God, I know that You love me"—pray that—"I know that You love me. God, I know that You want to save me"—friend, He does want to save you. *"The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). He longs for you to be saved. There's no one here so good he doesn't need to be saved, and no one here so bad he cannot be saved—"Lord, I know You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me"—and friend, He did die to save you. Say that—"Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus"—pray it from your heart—"I do trust You, right now, this moment, with all of my heart. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus"—pray that, and mean it—"Save me, Lord Jesus."

Then, pray this: "Thank You for doing it. I receive it by faith. I don't look for a sign. I don't ask for a feeling. I stand on Your Word. Thank You for saving me. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. In Your holy name. Amen."



# Birthmarks of a Believer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** October 18, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 John 2:3–11

*“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.”*

1 JOHN 2:3

## Outline

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## Introduction

Turn, if you will, please, to 1 John chapter 2, and in just a moment, we're going to begin reading in verse 3 and read right on through verse 11. We're talking about the sweetest fellowship this side of Heaven, and today, we're going to be talking about the birthmarks of a believer. Do you know, when we have been saved, we are born again, and we're born from above? And, *when we're Heaven-born, we're Heaven-bound*. And, when we're Heaven-born and Heaven-bound, we're Heaven-blessed. And, there are some radical transformations that take place in our lives. And, when we're born from above, there are some birthmarks, there are some traits of the twice-born, because not everybody who's talking about Heaven is going there, and not everybody who says he or she is saved is saved.

Before we get right into the text, let me just show you three statements here. Look, if

you will, in verse 4: *“He that saith, I know him”* (1 John 2:4). Look in verse 6: *“He that saith he abideth in him”* (1 John 2:6). Look in verse 9: *“He that saith he is in the light”* (1 John 2:9). Now, what John is going to do is say that some people are saying one thing and living another. They are not what they claim to be. Their walk doesn’t match their talk. They don’t have the birthmarks of a believer.

Now, sometimes people think strange things about themselves, and those things are not true. The nurse came to the psychiatrist and said, “Doctor, there’s a man out here in the office who thinks he’s invisible.” The doctor said, “Go tell him we can’t see him.” There are people who have strange ideas about their Christianity. They say one thing, but they’re not necessarily true. So, we’re going to look at this passage of Scripture, and we’re going to find out what are the birthmarks of the believer, how can I say, “Yes, I have been born again, and I know that I know that Jesus Christ lives in me, and I in Him.”

You know, there are so many caricatures of Christianity. A caricature is a picture that is distorted. Certain characteristics are over emphasized, and certain characteristics are minimized or neglected; and so, what you have is a caricature. And, many people have a caricature of Christianity. Many people think Christianity, for example, is a matter of just behavior modification, trying to be better, and trying to do better. But, you can’t purify the water by painting the pump. It doesn’t work that way. Other people have the idea that Christianity is all negative: “Don’t do this, and don’t do this, and don’t do that.” And so, they have a negative religion. And, the devil wants you to think negatively about God, to think that God is some sort of a cosmic kill-joy and Christians are so straight-laced that they can’t have any joy in this life. That’s a caricature of Christianity. Other people have a caricature of Christianity, saying that all we’re interested in is going to Heaven when we die. Well, I am interested in going to Heaven when I die, but friend, Heaven is not just sitting around on a fluffy cloud wearing a woolly robe and plucking a harp, and *our salvation deals not only with the sweet by-and-by, but also with the now-and-now*. Right now, we have the Lord Jesus in our lives to give us a life that is full, wonderful, abundant, and free.

So, what is a true Christian? What is a true believer? Let’s look past the caricatures; let’s look past what some people say, and let me give you three traits of the twice-born—three birthmarks of the true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, they’re found in these scriptures that I just looked at, and they’re found...each one of them is clinging to that phrase, “If we say,” because John takes what some people say who are not saved and shows them what they would be if they were saved. What are the traits of the twiceA born?

## I. A Real Believer Submits to the Lordship of Jesus

The first one is this—it deals with the Lordship of Jesus Christ: a true believer—a real believer, a genuine Christian—is somebody who is submitted to the Lordship of Jesus. Look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4. Are you ready? *“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him”* (1 John 2:3–4). Now, that’s very important, because Jesus is Lord, and Jesus has a right to command us. He says, *“Why call [you] me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things [that] I say?”* (Luke 6:46). And, he says, “If you say that you know Him, and you don’t keep His commandments, you are a liar—you have never been saved” (1 John 2:4).

Now folks, we’re not saved by keeping the commandments; we keep the commandments because we’re saved. Look at that verse again, in verse 4: *“He that saith, I know him”*—that is the perfect tense. You say, “Well, I’m so blessed to know that, Pastor. Well, it’s the perfect tense. That means that it’s something that is done and accomplished, something in the past. “I have known Him.” You could translate it that way: “I have known Him.” Now look, if you will—*“and keepeth not his commandments”* (1 John 2:4)—that is in the present tense. Now, what it means is, I have an experience over here; I know Him—that’s already done. And, because that’s already done (perfect tense); now, in the present tense, I am keeping His commandments. Now, don’t get that backwards. Don’t start on this side and say, “I’m keeping His commandments in order that I might know Him.” No, no, no, no. We know Him (past tense), and that’s why we keep His commandments (present tense). We’re not saved by commandment teaching or keeping. But, if we are saved, we are going to keep His commandments.

You say, “Does that mean, Adrian, if I’ve ever broken one of His commandments, I’m not saved?” No, that isn’t what it means. The word *keep* is an interesting word, also. The word *keep* means “to value as you would value a treasure.” *If I were to give you something, I’d say, “Keep this for me.” Then, you would guard it and protect it, and because it’s valuable, and you give deference to it and respect toward it.* Do you give deference to the commandments of God? Do you guard them? Do you treasure the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ? Are they meaningful to you? Or, are you just blasé about it? Do you keep—do you guard—His commandments?

Also, this word *keep* was a sailor’s word. They didn’t have global positioning satellites when this was written, and men who would sail across the trackless sea, in order to steer their ships, they had to guide themselves by the stars. Those stars never change; and so, a sailor guard...guiding his ship across the ocean would be doing what they called “keeping the stars.” That is, he sets his course by the stars; he “keeps” the stars. Now folks, listen to me: those who are born again keep the commandments of Jesus. They submit to the Lordship of Jesus. They want to live their life according to

Jesus because they value His commandments, and they steer by His stars.

Are you doing that? I mean, is the burning ambition of your life to please Him, to keep His Word, to keep His commandments? Now, if not, do you know what the Apostle John calls you, if you say that you're saved? He says you're lying—he says you're lying. You are not saved if you don't keep the commandments, if you don't value these commandments, if you don't steer your life by these commandments. That doesn't mean that you could never, ever sin. A man steering the ship may get blown off-course; a man steering the ship may take his eyes from the stars and let the wheel turn in the wrong way. But, he sees what he's doing, and he corrects the course. The desire of his heart is to steer by those stars, and the desire of my heart is to live by God's Word. Is that the desire of your heart? If not, you need to meet the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now again, you're not saved by keeping the commandments, but if you are saved, there's a change in your heart and in your life, and you desire to do the will of God. From the moment I gave my heart to Jesus Christ to this very moment, there has been in my heart, in my life, a desire to do His will. Now, if that desire is not there, you need to put a big question mark after that thing that you call "salvation."

Now, you don't do this—you don't do this—because you are trying to work your way into Heaven; you do this because you love the Lord Jesus Christ. Look in verse 5: *"[For,] but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him"* (1 John 2:5). These are not legal commandments; they're love commandments. The love of God is made rich, and full, and perfect in our lives because God is in our hearts and in our lives, and *"the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost"* (Romans 5:5). That's the reason Jesus said in John chapter 14: *"If a man love me, he will keep my [word]"* (John 14:23). If you love the Lord Jesus Christ, you're going to obey Him and serve Him—not in order to earn your salvation, but because you love Him. I love Jesus, and I want to keep His Word. There are times that I'm sure that I've failed. There are times I'm sure that I stumble. But, I want to guard those commandments and steer my life by God's stars, to keep His commandments.

So, that's the first trait of the twice-born. Is that true in your heart and in your life? *"Hereby...know [we] that we know him, if we keep his commandments"* (1 John 2:3).

## **II. A Real Believer Seeks the Lifestyle of Jesus**

Now, let me give you the second one. The first one—what is it? We submit to the Lordship of Christ—we submit to the Lordship of Jesus. The second one: We seek the lifestyle of Jesus. Look, if you will now, in verse 6: *"He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked"* (1 John 2:6). That's the second trait of the twice-born: to walk as Jesus walked.

Let's go back and look in verse 5 and read 'till verse 6: *"But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked"* (1 John 2:5–6). Now, "the walk" means "the lifestyle." You know what my life is to be like? I'm to walk as Jesus walked. Now again, I don't walk as Jesus walked in order to be saved; I walk as Jesus walked because I abide in him, His life is in me, His life is reproduced in me. Look in verse 6 again: *"as he walked"* (1 John 2:6). Do you see that "as He"? Now, that little phrase, "as He," John uses quite a bit. And, when you see how John uses that little phrase, "as He," you're going to understand what it means to have the lifestyle of Jesus. That means "I'm going to be as He is."

You know, in 1 John 4, verse 17, the last part of that verse—look at it; just turn your Bible over there, and look at it. First John 4, verse 17, the last part: it says, *"[For] as he is, so are we in this world"* (1 John 4:17). *"As he is, so are we"*—not when we get to Heaven, but—*"in this world"* (1 John 4:17). That is, I am to walk as He walked. He is my example; He is my pattern. When I abide in Him, I walk as He walked. That is, the lifestyle of the Lord Jesus is to be my lifestyle.

Now, how did Jesus walk? Well, 1 John 1:7 says He walked in the light. The Bible says, *"If we [are] in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another"* (1 John 1:7). Now, Jesus walks in the light. If I walk as Jesus walks, how am I going to walk? I'm going to walk in the light. Now, what does it mean to walk in the light? It means nothing hidden—I'm not in darkness.

### **A. A Life of Honesty**

To walk in the light is to walk as Jesus walked, and that is with honesty. One of the great marks of walking as Jesus walked is you're going to be honest. Jesus was honest with the Father, He was honest with Himself, and He was honest with others. Now, if you're living a lie, you're not walking as Jesus walked. If your heart is full of deceit and lies, you need to get saved. That's all there is to it. Jesus walked honestly.

### **B. A Life of Purity**

Now, not only did Jesus walk in honesty, but Jesus also walked in purity. Take your Bibles, and look, if you will, in 1 John 3:3—look at it: *"And every man that hath this hope in him"—"every man that hath this hope in him"—"purifieth himself"—now, listen to it—"even as he is pure."* Is Jesus pure? Of course He is. Then, I have to ask myself, "Am I walking as He walked?" Well, then, if He walks in the light, I'm going to walk in the light. If He is pure, I'm going to be pure. That means that if there's filth, immorality, pornography, impurity in my life, that's not the lifestyle of Jesus. Some of you claim to be saved, and you're reading filthy literature. You're subscribing to dirty magazines. You're letting the devil pump filth right into your home through **Hell's Box Office**. Would

you watch that if Jesus Christ were sitting on the couch next to you? Can you imagine Jesus Christ doing that?

### **C. A Life of Righteousness**

You see, what are the marks of a believer? What are the traits of the twice-born? He submits to the Lordship of Christ because he keeps His commandments. He seeks the lifestyle of Christ. What is the lifestyle? It is one of honesty—he walks in the light. It is one of purity, and it is one of righteousness. Let me show you another verse there. Look in 1 John 3 and verse 7: *“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous”* (1 John 3:7). There’s our phrase—“even as He.” Each time it says, “even as He”—that is, I am to be like Jesus is: “even as He.”

Now, righteousness is not merely not doing certain things. You say, “Well, I don’t steal, and I don’t get drunk, and I don’t curse.” Well, neither does a telephone pole. No, listen: Jesus went about doing good—that was righteous. Everywhere He went, He was doing good. That is the lifestyle of Jesus. The Bible says, “We are to walk as He walked” (1 John 2:6), because 1 John 4:17: *“as he is, so are we in this world.”*

Now, *“he that saith he abideth in him ought...also...to walk”* (1 John 2:6). You see that in verse 6? The secret of walking as Jesus walked is to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, what does it mean to abide in Him? Well, go to the Gospel of John, and the Master Teacher explains it in John chapter 15, verse 5: He says, *“If you abide in Me and...” And, Jesus said, “I am the vine, [and] ye are the branches”* (John 15:5)—“you are to abide in Me just like a branch abides in a vine.” Well, how does a branch abide in a vine?

### **D. A Life of Relinquishment**

Well, in the first place, it is the life of full relinquishment—relinquishment. What does that mean? It means that the vine and the branch have such a relationship that the branch is totally surrendered to the vine. Are you totally surrendered to Jesus Christ? That’s what it means to abide in Him. Did you know that a branch has no side issues? None. “Well,” you say, Pastor, “I’ve got to have side issues. I mean, I’ve got a job—I need a vacation; I need recreation. Are you trying to tell me that all I can do is serve Jesus?” That’s what I’m trying to tell you: that’s all you do, is to serve Jesus—nothing else. You say, “What about my job?” If you use your job right, you’ll be serving Jesus with your job. You say, “What about my family?” You’re serving Jesus with your family. “What about my recreation?” You’re serving Jesus with your recreation. I’m telling you, to abide means you don’t have any side issues. The Apostle Paul said, *“This one thing I do”* (Philippians 3:13). Jesus said, *“No man can serve two masters”* (Matthew 6:24)—that’s what He said.



## E. A Life of Reliance

Now, the life of a branch is a life of relinquishment; it is a life of reliance. Do you know—listen—the branch doesn't depend upon any thing else except the vine. Everything that the branch needs the vine supplies. When the branch needs water, the vine sends down his roots and brings water to the branch. When the branch needs sap, it just clings to the vine, and the vine puts its life into the branch. When it's the Fall, and grapes are there, the branch doesn't worry about how many grapes, what size, what color, how sweet. Listen, the branch does not produce the grapes. All the branch does is bear the grapes. It has but one thing to do, and that is to relinquish to the vine, and rely upon the vine, and then rejoice in the vine.

Jesus said, *"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you...that your joy might be full"* (John 15:11). You know, people were watching the Lord Jesus. They couldn't understand His life. They couldn't understand how He lived, how He did all of these things. It was an open secret. Jesus, as the model human being, Jesus said, "Look, what the Father does, I do. What the Father says, I say. What I see the Father doing, that's what I'm doing" (John 5:19). What Jesus is saying is that "I am totally, 100% committed to the Father. It is not I but the Father who's doing these works in Me." Now, come up here close, and I want to tell you something: if you want to walk as Jesus walked, when you are to Jesus what Jesus was to the Father, Jesus will be to you what the Father was to Jesus. You just abide in the Lord Jesus Christ, and 1 John 2, verse 6 says, *"He that saith he abideth in him ought...also...to walk, even as he walked"* (1 John 2:6). You see, that is the life of God that is reproduced in you. This is supernatural. You're not just trying to imitate Jesus.

There's a novel. I read it when I was a teenager, and now our teens are reading it again, and I'm grateful. It's called **IN HIS STEPS**, and it tells about a group of people who began to ask this question in a particular city and church: What would Jesus do if He were here? And, you've seen kids and adults wearing a bracelet, "WWJD"—"What Would Jesus Do?"—to remind them. And, I'm not opposed to that at all, but I just want to put this caveat there—I just want to put this explanation there—because—listen to me very carefully—it's not enough for you just simply to ask, "What Jesus would do?" And, I'll tell you why.

### 1. What Would Jesus Do? That Presumes You Know What Jesus Would Do

That presumes that you would know what Jesus would do. Now friend, Jesus will surprise you, and many times He'll do things that you wouldn't think He would do. And, unless He gives you insight into what He would do, you wouldn't have a clue sometimes.



## 2. What Would Jesus Do? That Presumes You Could Do It

And, number two: It presumes that even if you knew what Jesus would do, you could do it. Now, suppose I am standing at the plate in the World Series or in the big league baseball game, and that pitcher winds up there, and he throws that ball across that plate at 100 miles an hour. And, I just ask myself, “Well, now, what would Mark McGwire do?” So what? I mean, I am not Mark McGwire. For you to ask yourself what would Jesus do, that presupposes that you could do what Jesus would do if you knew what Jesus would do.

## 3. What Would Jesus Do? Jesus Is Here, Living Inside You

And, here’s the third thing. You say, “Well, what would Jesus do if He were here?” Friend, Jesus is here. That’s the whole thing you need to understand: He is here. He is alive and well through His Spirit living in you. And, as you abide in Him, His life comes into you. And now, the life you live you live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved you and gave Himself for you. And, it is *“not I, but Christ [that lives] in me”* (Galatians 2:20). As you abide in Christ, His life is reproduced in you. He knows what He wants to do. He can do what He wants to do because He is here now, alive. And, a Christian is the visible part of the invisible Christ, and Jesus is the invisible part of the visible Christian. And, *“he that saith he abideth in him ought...to walk, [also] as he walked”* (1 John 2:6).

Now listen, this is the lifestyle. A mark of a true believer in Jesus Christ is not somebody who just subscribes to a code, or a cause, or a church, but it is somebody who is abiding in Christ—who, like a branch, is drawing his life from the vine and abiding in Him. Look at it again in verse 6: *“He that saith he abideth in him ought...also...to walk, even as he walked”* (1 John 2:6). So, what is a trait of the twice-born? Number one—listen: You submit to His Lordship; you keep His commandments. Number two: You seek His lifestyle. Now, that doesn’t mean that you’re going to be as perfect as Jesus. You won’t have that till you get to Heaven, but this is the goal: the desire of your life is to let His life come through you.

## III. A Real Believer Shows the Love of Jesus

Number three—number three—here’s the third mark. Now again, look down there at that little phrase “he that saith,” and notice how John straightens us out in verse 9: *“He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him”* (1 John 2:9–10). That’s the third thing he says. “He that saith... He that saith... He that saith.” The first one is—listen, folks—the first mark of a true believer is he submits to the Lordship of Jesus. The second mark is he seeks the lifestyle of Jesus. The third mark is he shows the love of Jesus—he shows the love of Jesus.

You see, *“God is love”* (1 John 4:8), and when His nature is in me, when I’m born again, His nature is in me. And, Romans 5:5 says that *“the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.”* So, if His love is in me, then I’m going to love others. If my heart is headquarters for hate, I am not saved. Friend, you can’t hate any body—any body—no matter what they’ve done. When they were nailing Jesus up to the cross, He prayed for them, *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:34).

Earlier in this passage of Scripture, He says, *“A new commandment give I unto you”—or, Jesus said in John 13—“A new commandment give I unto you, That [you] love one another; [even] as I have loved you”* (John 13:34).

### **A. It Is Serving Love**

And, Jesus said that after He’d washed His disciples’ feet, because real love is not just saying, “I love”; it is serving love. Can you imagine Jesus washing the smelly feet of fishermen?

### **B. It Is Sanctifying Love**

It is sanctifying love. He was washing the feet as a symbol that He was cleansing and forgiving their sin.

### **C. It Is Steadfast Love**

It was steadfast love. John 13 says, *“[And] having loved his own...he loved them [to] the end”* (John 13:1). Right on, He never stopped loving them. There was that old, loud-mouthed Peter, the big fisherman—He loved him. There were James and John, “the sons of thunder,” with their hair-trigger temper. They were the ones who wanted to call down fire upon the Samaritans: “Lord, You want us to nuke them? Lord, a little heavenly napalm will take care of those people down there” (Luke 9:54). And, Jesus said, “You don’t know what you’re talking about” (Luke 9:55). They were there. Jesus loved them. There was doubting Thomas, cynical, quizzical, doubting—Jesus loved him. There was calculating Philip—Jesus loved him. There was even Judas, who betrayed Him—and Jesus washed His feet and said, *“If I...your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; [you]...ought to wash one another’s feet”* (John 13:14). “You ought to love one another, as I have loved you” (John 13:34; John 15:12).

Folks, listen to me: the mark that you know Jesus is that you have love. Jesus said, “If you have love one for another, then are you My disciples” (John 13:35). If you have any kind of racial hatred in your heart, you need to bring it to Calvary—and I mean soon. Get rid of it.

I’ve just come back from Israel. They have a museum there in the new city of Jerusalem called Yad Vashem. It is a Holocaust memorial, and it shows the atrocities that Nazi Germany perpetrated upon the Jews. Six million of them were put to death—

not simply because they were enemies in war, but because they were Jews. It was a form of racial cleansing. That museum is so heartbreaking. I could not believe that educated, literate, artistic, intelligent Germans could do what they did—I couldn't believe it; yet there is that mute testimony to it all. I felt tears coming up. I bowed my head in shame. I stood there, and I prayed. And, as I walked through that museum, I wanted to find a Jew somewhere, and put my arms around him, and say, "I am sorry—I am sorry. I didn't do it, but I'm sorry it happened." And, the worst thing about it is that Germany was known as a "Christian" nation. *"He that saith [I know Him], and hateth his brother"* (1 John 2:9)—John says, "He's a liar. He's a liar—just a liar."

## Conclusion

Now friend, I am telling you—you listen to me—you are not saved by submitting to His Lordship. You are not saved by seeking His lifestyle. You are not saved by showing His love. But, if you are saved, you'll do all of those things. You're saved by the grace of God. But, *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 creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Years ago, in a little Welsh mining town, there was an evangelist. His name was Henry Morehouse. Henry Morehouse preached primarily the love of God. His text was John 3:16. Everywhere he went, he preached John 3:16. And, there was a man in that little Welsh mining town who was a drunkard; a brawler; a profane, ungodly man; a gambler who consorted with prostitutes, who had abused and beaten his wife and his children. His name was Ike Miller. When Ike Miller heard that Henry Morehouse was there holding revival, Ike Miller said, "If that preacher preaches tonight in this town, I'm going to come to the meeting, and I'm going to pistol whip him out of town." And, the people knew Ike Miller, and they said to Henry Morehouse, "Brother Morehouse, don't preach here tonight. Go on somewhere else. Don't let this man abuse you this way." Henry Morehouse said, "No, I'll be there tonight, and I'll trust God to take care of me. But, I'll preach."

That night the little church was full when this man of God stood up into the pulpit, and everybody heard the back door slam. And, in walked this hulk of a man with a pistol in his hand, and he sat down, and folded his arms like this, and looked at the preacher as if to say, "You do your stuff, and then I'm going to do mine." Henry Morehouse began to preach. He took his text from John 3:16, and he preached, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but [should] have everlasting life."* And, he poured his heart out, and he preached what I'm preaching this morning—the love of God. And, when he preached that, at the close of the service, this hulking man stood up like that. And, everybody

said, “Oh, no, it’s about to start.”

But, rather than coming forward after the preacher, he turned and wheeled around out the door, slammed the door behind him, and began to walk down the street of that little mining town. And, the girls from the upper window said, “Ike, come one. Ike, let’s have a good time,” but he paid no attention. Some of the men in the saloon said, “Hey, Ike, come in. Let’s have a drink.” He paid no attention. He went down the main street of that little town until he came to a little side street, and he turned down that dusty side street until he came to a little weather-boarded shack. And, with his big ham-like fist, again, he threw the door open of that shack.

Inside was his wife, who’d been beaten and abused so many times, and little children. And, when those little children saw their father come home, they thought he’d come home in a drunken stupor. And, the little children, like squirrels, scurried under the bed. And, his wife spread her skirt out and backed up to hide the children under the bed.

He looked at her, and he said, “Woman, you don’t have to be afraid. Get the kids out from under the bed. We’re going to pray.” She said, “What?” He said, “You heard me, woman. Get the kids. We’re going to pray.” So, she got the kids out. And, Ike Miller kneeled down by the bed, and he tried to pray. He didn’t know how to pray. He said, “O God,” but no prayer came. “Lord”—no prayer came. And then, he remembered a prayer that his mother had taught him when he was a little boy, and this is what he prayed: “Simple Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child; forgive my simplicity, and suffer me to come to Thee.” And, Ike Miller was saved. He’s the one who has recorded this story that we can share.

You know what it was that changed Ike Miller’s life? People came to Henry Morehouse and said, “Why didn’t you preach the wrath of God? Why didn’t you scold him? Why didn’t you preach against sin?” He said, “Because that man needed love—he needed the love of God.”

And friend, that’s what our world needs. And, when we began to practice what John is talking about—when we submit to the Lordship of Jesus, when we seek the lifestyle of Jesus, when we show the love of Jesus—this world is going to believe what we say is real. That’s the reason why John keeps on saying, “If we say... If we say... If we say...” It’s time to stop talking the talk and walking the walk, amen? To be like Jesus.

So, bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. The God that saved Ike Miller is the God who’ll save you today. Your lifestyle may not have been the lifestyle of Ike Miller, but there’s nobody so good they don’t need to be saved and nobody so bad they cannot be saved, if they’ll trust Jesus. Would you pray, “Lord Jesus—Lord Jesus—come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Look upon me, gentle Jesus, meek and mild. Look upon a little child. Forgive my simplicity, and suffer me to come to

Thee. Come into my heart, Jesus, and save me”?

Lord, I pray that all over this building people will be opening their heart to You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

# How to Be a Growing Christian

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 25, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 2:12–14**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Thrilling Wonders of Childhood
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## Introduction

**T**ake God's Word—as we've already told you, 1 John, the second chapter—and in just a moment, we're going to begin looking where we left off last week, and that is with verse 12. Now, here's what I want to talk to you about today—listen carefully: “How to be a Growing Christian.” May I ask you a frank and a personal question? Are you a growing Christian? I didn't ask if you are a Christian; I asked, are you a growing Christian? Are you moving toward maturity? You can be young only once, but you can be immature for a long, long time. And, the problem in many of our churches is that we have people who've been born, but they cease to grow. So, we want to talk to you a little bit about how to be a growing Christian, because fellowship in churches comes about when we grow.

Now, look in verse 12: *“I write unto you, little children”*—now, underscore the word “little children”—*“because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers”*—underscore the word “fathers”—*“because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men”*—underscore the phrase “young men”—*“because [you] have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because [you] have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because [you] are strong, and the word of God abideth in you”—“in you”—“and ye have overcome the wicked one”* (1 John 2:12–14).

Now, he mentions three categories of persons—children, young men, and fathers—

and what he's talking about here is growing into maturity, coming from children to fatherhood. Now, what are the marks of maturity? "Well," you say, "spiritual health is a mark of maturity." Not necessarily. A five-year-old can be perfectly healthy; he's not mature. So, you can have spiritual health and not be mature. "Well," you say, "having spiritual gifts—that's a mark of maturity." Oh, no—you can be greatly gifted and not be mature. I think the President of the United States is greatly gifted, but, very frankly, I think he's acting kind of childish—I really do. You can take that as political or any way you want—I don't mean it political. I'm just telling you, dear friend, that you can be gifted and not grow up. Samson was mighty gifted. Samson was a man that had great gifts, but he was so immature. Paul had to talk to the Corinthian church. He said to the Corinthian church, "[You] come behind in no gift" (1 Corinthians 1:7). But, he said, "*I...could not speak unto you as...spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ*" (1 Corinthians 3:1). Now, we're talking, now, about not even spirituality. You can be instantly spiritual; I mean, you can get your heart right with God this morning and be filled with the Holy Spirit, be as clean as the driven snow, but that does not mean that you are a mature Christian.

We're talking about going on to maturity. What is maturity? Maturity is Christ-likeness. Put this verse in your margin—Ephesians 4, verse 13: Paul says, "*Till we all come [to] the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man*"—and the word "perfect" here does not mean "sinless"; it means "mature"—"*unto a [mature] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:13). You know how I measure my ministry? Not the size of the buildings, or the Love Offering, or the Sunday School attendance—are you becoming more and more like Jesus? Are you becoming more and more like Jesus? That was the goal of Paul's ministry.

Put this verse down—Colossians 1 and verse 28: Paul says, "*Whom we preach*"—that is, Jesus—"*warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*" (Colossians 1:28). And, again, the word "perfect" means "mature." Now, maturity is a lifelong process, folks. It's not a 100-yard dash; it is a marathon. Nobody is instantly mature. A wise man has said, "If you want to grow a squash, you can do that in 40 days. If you want to grow an oak, you can do that in 40 years." You can be instantly spiritual, you can be gifted, you can be healthy, but you cannot be mature. So, I'm trying to teach you, now, how to move into maturity—to go from childhood to adolescence to fatherhood. That's what John is talking about.

## **I. The Thrilling Wonders of Childhood**

Now, first of all, he talks about the childhood stage. Look, if you will, in verse 12: "*I write*



*unto you, little children*" (1 John 2:12). Now, write this word down: "the thrilling wonders of childhood"—"the thrilling wonders of childhood." Oh, it's so wonderful. Little babies are so wonderful. We love little babies; our church loves little babies. I think that's one of the things that makes Bellevue the great church that it is: we love little children. Little children are wonderful. The joys, the thrills, the excitement when God brings a baby into a home!

But now, let me tell you something, folks: I've been doing a survey of little children. By the way, I am a bona fide grandfather, and you learn things by being a grandfather that you don't learn by being a father, because when you're a grandfather, you can back yourself out and study a little bit and you can watch. And, do you know what I have learned through my very scientific study as a bona fide grandfather, through my humble but accurate opinion? Let me tell you about little children—these wonderful little children. They're selfish. The most selfish creature on earth is a baby. I mean, every movement is this way. You take something away from him, and he'll go into a rage. Not only are they selfish, but they're crude and rude. They will burp in your face and think nothing of it.

Now, I'll tell you something else about them: they're lazy. They just lie around the house; they don't do anything. They don't help cook; they don't help clean. They don't bring anything in; they are lazy and unproductive.

These precious little children—I'll tell you something else about them: they are totally inconsiderate. They'll wake you up in the middle of the night.

And, I'm going to tell you something else about it: you won't agree with this, but they're mean—they're mean. We have two grandsons in right now, Andrew, that I affectionately call "Throckmorton," and now Stephen Paul has come home from Spain. And now, we have Stephen Paul, who's approximately one, and Andrew, who's approximately two, and we're thinking, "How wonderful that is when the little cousins can get together!" So, the first time we put them down there, here's Andrew—he's beginning to look like a sumo wrestler right now. And, here's Andrew, and here is Stephen Paul. And, we say, "Isn't this wonderful? We've got our little grandsons together." I mean, they have not been on the floor for 30 seconds before Stephen Paul moved over and bit Andrew—I mean, good, took a chunk out of Andrew. Mean! Mean little kids. Now, we think about these sweet little darlings. I'm telling you, friends, they're selfish. They're rude. They're inconsiderate. They're lazy. They're unproductive and sometimes mean.

Now, if you look at a little child like that and say, "Hey, if that's a human being, I don't want to be one"... Have you ever heard anybody say, "If that's a Christian, I don't want to be one"? They look at a little baby Christian... You know, thank God for little baby

Christians, but little baby Christians have to grow up. But, when you get saved, nobody is saved full grown. And, I don't care what age you are when you get saved, you are a babe in Christ. And, John is writing to some, and he calls them "little children" (1 John 2:12). Now, thank God for little children. Thank God for people like this, folks—I mean, I'm grateful for this, but don't find some baby in our church and say, "Well, now, if that's what being a Christian is, I don't want to be a Christian." No, that's a baby Christian. They have to grow up.

And, you know, I used to think that a great church was a church where everybody was a mature Christian. That's not a great church, Brother Jim; that's a failing church. That would be like saying, "A great home is a home where there are all adults and there are no children and no grandchildren." See, that's not a great home—that's not a great home. Thank God for the spilled milk. Thank God for the dirty diapers. Thank God for the Cheerios on the floor. Thank God for—listen—all of that comes with it. And, we need to make these baby Christians who come to Jesus feel at home, and we need to love them. And, our church, in one sense, is a maternity ward. Now, the problem is, some stay in the maternity ward far too long. I mean, suppose we're to go to the Love Building over here we built for these children over here, and we find a 40-year-old man being rocked with this thumb in his mouth and say, "Well, what about you? Why are you here?" He said, "Well, I used to be here 40 years ago, and I liked it so much I've just decided to stay right here." That's what we call "arrested development." That's what happens. Sometimes it happens physically. Sometimes little children do not develop physically. And, our hearts go out to parents like that, and we have a very special ministry to children like that in our church. And, I thank God for that, but friend, when it can be different—when you can choose to be different, but when you are a great big baby still on the bottle, still sucking your thumb, not growing, not serving, not working, having to be served, and still selfish, and still rude, and still crude, and still lazy, and still un-thoughtful—may God have mercy upon you. You're to grow. There is a legitimate childhood.

But, you know, Paul said to the Corinthian Christians, "[You] come behind in no [gifts]" (1 Corinthians 1:7). But, I "could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:1). They were using spiritual gifts as toys, not tools. They didn't understand what it means to be spiritual in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, the very first thing I want you to see is the thrilling wonders of childhood. What's the main thing about a new Christian? What does he think about? Look, if you will, in verse 12: "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake" (1 John 2:12). That's what? That's the blessing of getting saved. Thank God my sins are forgiven; I'm on my way to Heaven. That's the main thing that a

little child is concerned about—getting to Heaven. And, when a little child gives his testimony, by and large, he'll go all the way back to the only testimony he has—about how he got saved and how his sins are forgiven, and that is wonderful.

## II. The Triumphant Warfare of Manhood

Now, here is the second stage: the first stage is the thrilling wonders of childhood—second stage, the triumphant warfare of manhood. Look, if you will now, in verse 13: he says, *“I write unto you, young men, because [you] have overcome the wicked one”* (1 John 2:13). Look in the last part of verse 14: *“I have written unto you, young men, because [you] are strong, and the word of God abideth in you”* (1 John 2:14). No longer milk bottles, but mighty battles. These have moved to become workers and warriors. I wonder, are you a worker? Are you a warrior? Are you no longer being served, but are you a servant? I mean many, many in this building are still being served. You don't do one blessed thing, folks. I don't want to hurt your feelings, but you've come up and sit here on Sunday mornings and think you've done God a wild favor. I mean, if the ongoing of this church depended upon you folks, it'd be sad around here for many folks. I mean, you're saved, but you're not a worker—you're not a warrior. You're not in the battle. You have simply gotten saved and said, “Hallelujah! Thank God! My sins are forgiven,” and there you have stopped.

Now, I wonder, folks, are you a warrior? You see, when you really go on, you move to the next stage. And, John says the Word of God has made you strong, and you've overcome the wicked one (1 John 2:14). “Well,” you say, “Pastor, I'm not afraid of the devil.” That's not even the question. The question is, is the devil afraid of you? I mean, are you any threat to Satan's kingdom? Are you overcoming the wicked one? The Bible says, *“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7). Do you know what the devil wants? Let me tell you what the devil wants: **the devil wants to line up like the Green Bay Packers against the kindergarten—that's what he wants. And friend, in the average church, that's what happens. He calls the play, and right up the middle they go, because what you've got out here is a lot of little kindergartners: they're not strong; they don't know anything about the battle. And, Satan is having his way, because he is fighting against an army of children.** Young men are strong; they've overcome the wicked one. Are you a victor or a victim? Are you an overcomer or overcome? Are you strong? Does the Word of God abide in you? Can you honestly, literally say that you're an overcomer? If not, if you've been saved for a while, shame on you. If you're a little baby, yes—welcome into the nursery. But, this delayed growth is a shame to Almighty God.

### III. The Tested Wisdom of Fatherhood

Now, here's the third stage—watch it: first of all, there's the thrilling wonders of childhood; secondly, the triumphant warfare of manhood; thirdly, the tested wisdom of fatherhood—of fatherhood—because here's where the Lord is moving us to. Look in verse 13: *"I write unto you, fathers, because [you've] known him...from the beginning"* (1 John 2:13). Verse 14, again: *"I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him"* (1 John 2:14). The idea of a father is a person who has come to mature wisdom. He knows; he understands. He has even moved beyond building and battling. He has this wisdom; he has this God-likeness. He has been with the Lord so long that his life is beginning to manifest the likeness of God. He is God-like; he has become a father. We speak of God as a Father—"our Father." And, by the way, he's not talking here about chronological age, and he's not talking here about gender; this is only an illustration. If you're a woman, this applies to you. If you're a young person, this applies to you. I mean, you can be a spiritual father and be a teenager. What he's talking about here is spiritual maturity. And so, there are the thrilling wonders of childhood; there's the triumphant warfare of manhood, but there is the tested wisdom of fatherhood.

You see, a father is somebody who has children. Have you reproduced? Do you have any spiritual children? Paul talked of Timothy as his *"son in the faith"* (1 Timothy 1:2). He said to the church of Corinth—he said, "I'm your spiritual father." (1 Corinthians 4:15) You know, I am a physical father, but I thank God that God has given me the privilege of being a spiritual father. Did you know what? I have a lot of spiritual children. I have some grandchildren—I have some great-grandchildren—spiritually (people that I've won to Jesus who've won people to Jesus who've won people to Jesus). Are you going to go to Heaven empty-handed? Are there going to be any children there—I'm talking about spiritual children—when you come to the throne, when you stand at Jesus's feet? Will you say, "Father, this is my spiritual family, because I have become like You. I have become a father"? You see, a father is known for his wisdom.

A father is known for his ability to give. When we receive the Love Offering, I hope you will move into the father stage. Do you know one of the great joys of this stage of life is to give to my children and to my grandchildren? That is one of the greatest joys of my life. And, when you become a father in the Lord, you're going to want to give to the spiritual children, these little babes, to help them to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

Now, I want you to listen very, very carefully: God is not trying to say that you substitute fatherhood for manhood or that you substitute manhood for childlikeness. No, a father is a composite of all of these things. Never lose the wonder of childhood. Now, the Bible says, *"Put away childish things"* (1 Corinthians 13:11). But, the Bible says,

“Still be childlike.” (Matthew 18:3) You know, a child has that wonder, that sweetness. Keep that in you: keep the wonder, keep the excitement, keep the joy. Remember when your sins were forgiven you. Never forget it—never forget it. *“I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you”* (1 John 2:12). Thank God for that. *“I [write] unto you, young men, because [you’re] strong, and the word of God [abides] in you...[you’ve] overcome the wicked one”* (1 John 2:14). When you get to be a father, you don’t cease in the battle, you don’t lose the wonder, you don’t step out of the warfare—you just add all of these things to it until you become a full-grown man. And, that’s the reason that a person who is really mature in the Lord...

Did you know that little children enjoy these kinds of people? Because they themselves still have their childhood; they’ve never lost the wonder. Did you know there ought to be a little boy in every man—a little girl in every woman—who’s full-grown? Still loves to laugh, to play, to rollick, to have the good times. And, I don’t care who you are—there ought to be that manhood. You ought to stay in the battle; you ought to stay in the warfare. The Word of God ought to be in you. You just simply add all these things together until you become a full-orbed individual—what the Bible calls a “father”—and then you are at home in any crowd with little children. You know, little children love Jesus; they’d come sit in His lap. And, the older men... The Apostle John, when he was old, he loved to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, what we’re talking about here is growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Peter 3:18).

Now, let me tell you, folks—now, let me ask you an obvious question: Who wrote this Book of 1 John? What’s his name? John—John wrote five books. By the way, this is just parenthetical, but I was on the airplane this past week, going to a board meeting, and I sat beside a sweet little old grandmother. And, I was reading 1 John and some books about 1 John. She looked over at me. She said, “Oh, I see by your materials... Who are you with?” I said, “Well, I’m connected to the Lord Jesus Christ, but,” I said, “I’m a Baptist by denomination.” And, she said—well, I wasn’t ready for this one: “Well, who wrote the Johannine materials?” I said, “Well, if you mean the books,” I said, “John wrote five of them: he wrote the gospel; he wrote 1, 2, 3 John, the Book of the Revelation.” She said, “Not everybody agrees with that.” I said, “Good night! Who am I sitting by?” I thought she was some sweet little grandmother. That’s all aside; I won’t put that in the second message. But anyway, it has absolutely nothing to do whatever... I’ve wasted three minutes right here with what I have to say, but John wrote this—that’s what I’m trying to say.

John wrote this, and if you say, “Oh, dear, sweet old John, the beloved disciple...” You know, when we think of John, don’t you have just sort of a nice idea of John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, the one who wrote about love and told us to love one

another? I want to tell you, friend, if you'd been around John when he was a young man, you would not have wanted to be around John. Let me tell what John was like. Do you want to know what John was like by nature? Do you know what his nickname was? "Son of Thunder" (Mark 3:17)—that was his nickname. He had a hair trigger. Do you know what he was by his natural disposition? Selfish as all get-out. James and John came to Jesus and said, "Lord, when you come into Your Kingdom, I'd like to sit on Your right hand, and my brother over here wants to sit on Your left hand" (Mark 10:37). That's what he said. When they were there going through Samaria and the Samaritans would not receive them, you know what John said? He said, "Lord, You want us to call down some fire from Heaven? Lord, a little heavenly napalm—that'll fix these folks here. God, let's nuke them until they glow. And then, we can shoot them in the dark. Lord, O God, let's get them" (Luke 9:54). Jesus had to say, "John, you don't know what spirit you're of" (Luke 9:55). I mean, don't get the idea that John was Mr. Nice Guy. John was not Mr. Nice Guy when Jesus got hold of him, but he grew in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

You see him later on—he's called "beloved apostle." You see him later on when he went to Samaria—he was the one who led that revival there; it wasn't consuming fire, but Holy Ghost fire, that he brought down upon them the second time when he came. He was the one who wasn't trying to be first, but he was the one who taught us to love one another. You see, what John is talking about now—the Apostle John—he has experienced; he has grown in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). And, that means, if there was hope for old John, there's hope for you. You can grow.

Now, I want to ask you another question: I didn't ask you, are you saved? Are you a growing Christian? I mean, listen, to fail to grow is a sin. If you don't love Jesus Christ more today than you did yesterday, you're backslidden. You need to be growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

Now, how are you going to grow? How are you going to grow? What are the means of growth? Because a growing church is a healthy and a happy church. That's where the fellowship is sweet.

#### **A. Growth Requires the Miracle of Life**

Well, number one: There must be the miracle of life—there must be the miracle of life. Now, he calls them "little children" in verse 12 (1 John 2:12). Actually, he uses two words for little children in this same passage of scripture. He uses one word, which just simply means "born ones," and then he uses another word, which means "children under discipline"—*teknia* and *paedeia*. And, you've got to be a born one—I mean, you



cannot grow up and then get born. Have you ever talked to somebody, and you try to lead them to Christ, and they say, “Well, I’ve got some things in my life I need to straighten out, and when I get all that done, then I’ll become a Christian”? You know, pardon me, but that’s not very bright. That’s like saying, “I’m going to grow up and then I’ll get born.” No, you see, it is birth that precedes growth.

When we were here many, many, many years ago in the old church building downtown, I had all the boys and girls—I was trying to teach a lesson on growth. And so, we got some little potted plants, and we gave them to different Sunday School classes. And, we told one, “Give this plant water, light, sunlight, and fertilizer.” We told others, “Give this plant water and fertilizer, but no sunlight.” Another one—“Give this sunlight, but no water and fertilizer,” until we had all of the different combinations that you could get. And, some plants were growing like this, and some were like this, and some were like this, and some were kind of like this. And then, we gave the kids a stick—just a plain wooden stick in a pot—and we said to them, “Give it light; give it water, and give it fertilizer.” And so, the kids would bring their different plants Sunday morning. We may do this again; it was a real good thing. They’d bring their plants to the platform on Sunday morning. But, you know what happened to those kids that had a stick? Their sticks never grew at all. It just wouldn’t grow, because the stick had no life.

Now, don’t try to grow up before you get born. Give your heart to Jesus Christ. And, first of all, you have to be born from above in order to grow. Are you saved? I mean, do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you have that life in you? First thing: Growth requires the miracle of life.

#### **B. Growth Requires the Passage of Time**

Second thing: Growth requires the passage of time. You will not be instantly mature. There are no shortcuts. Now, I did a little reading. I found out that a mouse reaches maturity in three months; cats and dogs are able to reproduce in 12 to 18 months; gorillas and chimpanzees, when they’re ten years old. But, human beings mature and become self-sufficient almost the slowest of all species. That is very interesting about those of us who think we are the smartest. But, there’s no instant maturity. And, just keep plodding along, and you’ll find out that you will grow.

#### **C. Growth Requires the Receiving of Nourishment**

Here’s a third thing that growth requires: it requires the receiving of nourishment. Now, I want to stop right here and talk a little bit. You know, the Bible says in 1 Peter 2:2: “*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that [you] may grow thereby.*” You don’t take a new Christian and give him a study in Revelation, Ezekiel, or Leviticus; you get him in the Gospel of John, other places. You get him in the “*milk of the word, [so]*



*that [he] may grow thereby*" (1 Peter 2:2). And, the word "desire" here means "to crave"—"to crave"—the milk of the Word. And, it's in the imperative form. You're commanded to crave the Word of God. You know what a newborn baby in the physical realm is interested in? Not the print on the curtains and not that wonderful little mobile that you hung over his bed—he's oblivious to that. It's the bottle, or it's that ho-mama-nized milk, whichever one he's on. But, I want you to know that he is interested in that milk, and that's what Peter is saying in 1 Peter 2:2: *"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that [you] may grow thereby."*

You know, if I were to come to you and to say, "How are you doing in your Christian life?" "Well, Pastor Rogers, I'm not doing very good. Hey, you, I'm not winning any battles; I'm not getting my prayers answered. Nothing is making sense. Very frankly, I'm discouraged." Well, I'd say, "Well, tell me about your Bible study." "Oh, well, I come and hear you preach on Sunday morning, Pastor; if company doesn't come, if it's not raining, I'm there to hear you preach. You ought to be happy at that." Friend, that'd be like giving a newborn baby four gallons of milk on weekends. That's just not going to get it done. You've got to be feeding day by day on the Word of God. That's where the strength comes.

Now, you can grow very fast. Ethel Barrett wrote about Dwight L. Moody. Many of you don't know Dwight L. Moody, but—I mean, well, he's dead; you couldn't know him, but you could've known about him. He was the Billy Graham of his day, and here's what she said about Moody. You know, Moody didn't have a theological education. She said this: "when Dwight L. Moody became a Christian, he developed such a hunger for God's Word, spent so much time reading it and was so quick to obey it, that he became a menace"—listen to this—"to some believers. His rapid spiritual growth was an embarrassment to certain people who, though they had been saved for years, never grew up in Christ. Week after week, in the church Moody attended, he would share a new experience that he'd had with the Lord. Finally, some of the older saints who couldn't stand feeling humiliated by his exemplary life went to Moody's uncle and urged him to quiet down his nephew." And then, Ethel Barrett said this: "His robust spiritual health and bounding energy disturbed their napping." He was just too much. So, while they were sucking their thumbs, he was growing, until he left them far behind. He grew more in a few years than they did in 30, because he got on the Word of God. I'm looking down here to my brother Jerry here; he's a recently new Christian. I just traveled Israel with him. I was surprised at how much he knew about the things of God, because he saturated his life with the Word of God. You've got to get the Word of God in your heart and in your life if you're going to grow.

Now, watch it. What does it take to grow? Listen, you've got to have birth. Number

two: It takes time. Number three: You have to be constantly feeding on the Word of God. Now, let me tell you something else about little babies: little babies will eat junk food if you'll give it to them, and little babies will put anything in their mouth—I mean, a cigarette butt, a roach, or anything else. I'm telling you, they'll put anything in their mouth. I am surprised at what some people who are members of this church—I'll come into their home, and they'll have Jehovah's Witness literature—and not even know it's Jehovah's Witness literature—in their home. I've talked to a lady the other day... Bless her heart. I met her at the airport, and I hope she's not listening to this right now; lady, I'm sorry. But, listen... I hope she is listening. She was telling me about visiting the Mormon Temple and how wonderful it was, and she did not understand the basic things, folks. Little babies will put anything in their mouth, in their head; they don't understand. The Bible says, "They don't have discernment"—"they don't have discernment." (Deuteronomy 32:28) You have to feed on the Word of God.

#### **D. Growth Requires Discipline and Exercise**

Listen, precious friend, it takes life. It takes time. It takes nourishment. And, I'll tell you something else: it takes discipline and exercise if you are to develop and not be a flabby Christian. Hebrews 5, verse 14: *"But strong meat belongeth to them [who] are of full age, even [to] those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil"* (Hebrews 5:14). The word there for "exercise" is the word we get our word "gymnasium" from. You know why we have so many flabby Christians? They come down the aisle of the church; they get baptized. Then, they come Sunday after Sunday—sit, soak, and sour. They do not exercise.

Now, you want to go on to maturity? Get a job. I mean, find something to do in this church. There's a place of service for you. You say, "Well Pastor, I can't teach." Maybe you can help in a ball club. Maybe you can help in the gymnasium. Maybe you can help in the dining hall. Maybe you can help in the office. Maybe you can help in the Sunday School class. Maybe you can help in the jail ministry. Begin to exercise, and don't just sit around like a turtle on a log. Get busy for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a shame and a disgrace that so many people have been Christians for so long and are still sitting in the nursery being rocked, sucking their thumb. Now, say "amen." You know it is true.

## **Conclusion**

Are you a growing Christian? If you're a child, thank God that you've been born into the family. Praise God, but I want you to become a young man. There's a battle; there's some work to be done. Are you a young man—a worker and a warrior? Thank God, but I want you to become a spiritual father. I want you to remind others of God. I want you

to become a giving person. I want you to become a reproducing person. I want you to be a person that has the knowledge of God—when somebody has a problem, they can come to you. And, you've been so much with God that you begin to act and look like Him. Did you know that you spend enough time with somebody you begin to look like them and act like them? Joyce is getting worried. Listen, folks: we become like God.

Now, here's the first step—is being born, becoming a little child. Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Have you been born into the family of God? Do you know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior? God wants to serve you, save you; He wants to forgive your sin, and He will do it. Will you pray a prayer like this? "O God, thank You for loving me so much. Thank You for sending Jesus to die for my sins. Thank You for paying my sin debt and taking the judgment that I deserve. You told me, if I would trust You, Lord Jesus, You would save me. I trust You right now. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Make me Your child. Save me, Lord. And, help me not to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen."

# How to Be a Growing Christian

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** October 31, 2004

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 John 2:12–14

*“I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake.”*

1 JOHN 2:12

## Outline

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## Introduction

Well, amen. Would you take God’s precious and holy Word and turn with me this morning to 1 John? And, if you’re new in the Bible, that’s back toward the end of the Bible—1 John chapter 2. And, in a moment, we’re going to read there. But, look up here and let me ask you a question—and answer it silently, but answer it honestly: Are you a growing Christian? Do you love and know the Lord Jesus Christ better than you did last year or last week? A wise man said, “To cease to be better is to cease to be good.”

Some Christians are saved, but they're not growing. They're not like a tree; they're like a stump or like a post. They don't grow. Now, you ought to be a growing Christian. And, you will never know the kind of victory that you ought to know and the kind of joy that you may have unless you learn to be a growing Christian.

Now, when I'm talking about growing Christians, I'm talking about maturity—maturity. You grow on toward maturity. You can be young only once, but you can be immature for a long, long time. You can be 40, 50, and still be spiritually immature. Now, the Bible says here in Hebrew chapter 6, verse 1—we're going to get to 1 John in just a moment—the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 6, verse 1, that we are to “go on toward maturity” (Hebrews 6:1). (Williams says, “Continually progressing toward maturity.”) So I want to talk to you about how to be a growing Christian. And, there's not a person in this auditorium that does not need this message, because none of us has yet arrived. So, I want you to get pencil and paper, and I want you to write down these things.

Now, let me tell you, first of all, what maturity is spiritually and what it is not.

#### **A. Maturity Does Not Mean Healthy**

You can be spiritually healthy and not mature. A five-year old child can be healthier than a 50-year-old man, but he is not mature. Now, if you're a newborn babe and you're rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ, you're healthy. But, that does not mean that you do not need to go on and mature.

#### **B. Maturity Does Not Mean Giftedness**

Hey, you can be gifted and not mature. As a matter of fact, if you're gifted and not mature, you may get yourself and others in a mess. The Corinthian church, Paul's most carnal church—he said to them, “[*You*] come behind in no gift” (1 Corinthians 1:7). They were gifted. Are you gifted spiritually, or are you gifted with talents? You may be, but that doesn't mean that you're mature.

#### **C. Maturity Is Christlikeness**

Now, what is maturity? Let me just give it to you in a simple sentence—don't forget this now: maturity is Christlikeness; maturity is being like Jesus. The Apostle Paul said in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 13: “*Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man*” (Ephesians 4:13). Now, that word “perfect” means “mature”; it doesn't mean “sinless.” You say a rose is a perfect rose—you don't mean it's a sinless rose. Now, what he is saying is this—Paul was saying that “the goal of my ministry is to present every man a mature Christian.” That's the goal of my ministry. I thank God for these buildings. I thank God for the Sunday School attendance. I thank God for the budget. I thank God for the organization. But friend, all of that is splendid nothing without you growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord

and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). What is the goal of my ministry, and what is the measurement of my ministry? Very simply, are you becoming more like the Lord Jesus Christ? Now, if you're becoming more like the Lord Jesus Christ, that is a blessing to me, and that is the sum total of my motivation for you—that you might become more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

## I. The Marks of Maturity

Now, I want you to notice, as we turn now to 1 John chapter 2, that maturity is a life-long process. And, actually, we go through three major stages. Look now, if you will, in 1 John chapter 2, and let's begin in verse 12: *"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because [you] have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one"* (1 John 2:12–14).

Now, in those verses, the Apostle John speaks of childhood—little children; he speaks of young manhood; and then, he speaks of fatherhood. Now, all of us today are in one of those three categories. And, God loves them all, and God loves you, but God wants to move you in progression through these stages until you come to the fatherhood stage. And, in our physical life, we are babies—we're children; then we become adolescents; then we grow up and become fathers and mothers.

### A. The Childhood Stage

Now, think with me a little bit. What is the mark of a childlike Christian? Well, little children know the thrilling wonders of childhood. Look in verse 12: *"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake"* (1 John 2:12). Now, when a person becomes a newborn babe in Christ, what is the mark? Well, he is thrilled at knowing Jesus. He blesses God that his sins are forgiven, buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness. He's all *tomorrows*; he is no *yesterdays*. And, he is thrilled. And, little children have the thrilling wonders of childhood.

But, the little child lives in the realm of his feelings. He is just thrilled with everything. He hasn't lost the wonder yet, and that's so wonderful to be a little child. Maybe you're a little child. Maybe you've been saved in the last year—maybe in the last six months, maybe just last week—and you just can't get over it. All my sin—not in part, but the whole—has been forgiven. And, you rejoice in forgiven sin. That's what he says right there in 1 John chapter 2 and verse 12: *"I write unto you, little children"*—look at it again—*"because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake"* (1 John 2:12).

Now, little children are wonderful, but we don't want them to stay little children. Let me tell you something: I am a bona fide father and grandfather, and I know a lot about little children. I will tell you and me that little children have some problems. Number one: little children are lazy. They can't and don't help around the house. I'll tell you something else about little children: they will burp in your face; they're rude. They're as rude as they can be. I'll tell you something else about them: they're selfish; they're self-centered. And, I'll tell you something else about the little rascals: they're uncooperative. They will wake you up in the middle of the night to wait upon them. These are the babes in Christ; these are the little children.

Sometimes they are just plain mean. Have you ever thought of a child being mean? I have two very young grandchildren, Andrew and Stephen Paul. And, Stephen Paul's father and mother are missionaries. And so, they were here on furlough, and we thought, "How wonderful now for Andrew and Stephen Paul to get to know one another!" So, we sat them down on the floor, and Stephen went over immediately and bit Andrew. That's a little child for you. Little children, you know, do some things that are not so great. As I say, they are rude. They're uncooperative. They are selfish, and sometimes they are mean. Now, you might make the mistake of saying, "If that's what a human being is, I don't want to be one." Okay? Have you ever heard anybody say, "If that's what a Christian is, I don't want to be one"? Well friend, little babies have to grow up. That doesn't mean that they haven't been saved if they're spiritually babes in Christ. They just have to grow.

I tell our Discovery Class, where we meet our new members, that I used to think that a perfect church was where everyone was a mature, Spirit-filled, Christlike Christian. Hey folks, that's not a perfect church. That is a failing church—if every one were a mature, Christlike Christian. Why would that be a failing church? It would mean that some people are not being saved day by day. You know, every morning here, when we preach, we ought to hear the cry of newborn babes. Amen? When we give the invitation and souls come forward and give their hearts to Jesus Christ and are twice-born, at that moment, they are a child. Now, that's wonderful. This church ought to be a maternity ward. But, the sad thing is that when the church becomes a maternity ward for some, they stay in it until it becomes a nursing home and they never mature. Can you imagine a 45-year-old man being rocked, sucking his thumb? What about some of you who've been saved for a long time? You have never gotten out of the baby stage. And, I'm ashamed of you, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself, because we said earlier on, "To cease to be better is to cease to be good." Now, there are the thrilling wonders of childhood.



## B. The Adolescence Stage

Now, that moves on, and we see the young man stage and the triumphant warfare of manhood. Look, if you will, in verse 13 and the last part of verse 14: *“I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men”*—now listen—*“because [you] have overcome the wicked one”* (1 John 2:13). And then, skip down to the last part of verse 14: *“I have written unto you, young men, because [you] are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and [you] have overcome the wicked one”* (1 John 2:14). Now, what does that mean? Well, these have come now from childhood to manhood. And, what does the Apostle John say that they are? They are workers, and they are warriors.

### 1. They Are Workers

I thank God for the workers in our church. I thank God for the spiritual warriors in our church. And, that’s so great to see these vibrant, healthy, wholesome people who are no longer children, who no longer have to be served, but have learned to serve. And, our church has so many workers. I tell you, all over this campus this morning there are workers everywhere you look. These ushers are workers. Go over to the nursery and there are workers there. As you drive out, there are workers helping with the traffic. Up there in the sound booth, there are workers helping me. How does all of this happen? And, our music program, and the leaders, the orchestra people—they are workers, and I thank God for them.

### 2. They Are Warriors

But, not only are they workers—they are warriors in the church. And, how do they become warriors? Well, the Word of God has made them strong. Look again in verse 14: *“I have written unto you, young men, because [you] are strong, and the word of God abideth in you”* (1 John 2:14). Now, would you like to stop being a child and start being a worker and a warrior? Then, how are you going to do it? The Word of God is going to make you strong. Now, you know what the devil wants to do? The devil wants to keep you in the childlike stage. He doesn’t want you to be strong; he doesn’t want you to be a worker and a warrior. And, because of that, he knows he can overcome you.

Now, I want you to imagine the finest junior high team that you know in football. Then, I want you to imagine the Tennessee Titans or the Green Bay Packers on one side; they’re lined up against this junior high school team. That wouldn’t be fair. If they played hard-nosed—what we call “smash-mouth football”—it would be devastating for that junior high school team, because they’re not mature. These others are mature. Now, the devil is like the Green Bay Packers. And, we are sending some junior high-schoolers up against them, because they have never matured; they’ve never been made strong. And, how are you going to be made strong? You’re going to be made

strong by the Word of God.

### **C. The Fatherhood Stage**

Now, there is the child stage. There is the young man stage. And then, there is the fatherhood stage. There's the father and the tested wisdom of fatherhood. Now, look, if you will, in verses 13 and 14: *"I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning"* (1 John 2:13). And then, in verse 14: *"I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning"* (1 John 2:14). Now, the father stage is maturity, where we have grown on. We think of God—what?—not as a child, not as a young man. How do we think of God? *"Our Father which art in heaven"* (Matthew 6:9). Now, the goal of my life and your life is to be Christlike, which is really to be like God the Father, because Jesus said, *"He that hath seen me hath seen [My] Father"* (John 14:9).

Now, how do you get to the third stage? Well, you know, if you spend enough time with someone, you begin to think like they do and act like they do. Sometimes, they say, when you've lived together for a long time, you even begin to look alike. I tell you, Joyce is getting worried. But, when we spend time with someone, we become like that someone.

### **3. Fathers Reproduce**

And, what do fathers do? Well, number one: Fathers reproduce through soul winning and discipleship. Are you reproducing yourself? Can you be called a "father" if you don't have any spiritual children? No. I'm not just talking about getting wiser; I'm talking about winning souls and reproducing yourself in soul winning and discipleship.

### **4. Fathers Provide for Others**

What does a father do? A father not only meets his own needs—he provides for the needs of others. Soon we're going to have the Love Offering, and I'm hoping that a lot of spiritual fathers will step up and become very much in the providing stage, because fathers have lived long enough to attain some wherewithal.

### **5. Fathers Have Wisdom**

Fathers provide for others. Fathers have wisdom. Do people go to you when they have a heartache, a tear, a fear, a problem and they want to talk with you? It's because you are mature; you have come to the fatherhood stage of maturity.

Now, here's what I want you to notice—that as you grow up, as you become a father, you do not substitute fatherhood for young manhood and you don't substitute young manhood for childhood. All three are legitimate, and a father is a composite of them all. In a father, there ought to be the vision, the zeal, of a young man. And, in a young man, there ought to be the wonder of childhood. You don't grow from one stage to another; you just add each stage on. So, when a person becomes a father, he is a

composite. In the father, there's a little child. In a father, there's a young man. And, in the young man, there is a child. Now, in you—if you're perfectly whole—all of those will be in you. Do you know who makes the best youth workers? These people who still have youth in them. They can think and identify with young people because that's still in them. And, who are the people that you would enjoy being around the most?

Well, I'll tell you, people like my daddy. You know, my daddy had a little boy in him. He always wanted to play—never grew out of that, never became old and crusty. And, there ought to be a little boy in every man, and there ought to be a young man in every man, and there ought to be a father in every man, when you reach that final stage of fatherhood. Now, these kinds of people in a church make the best children's workers and youth workers, when you become a composite of all of these things.

Now, who wrote this? Well, the Apostle John wrote it. You say, "Oh, dear, old, sweet John—he was just so wonderful. From the time he got saved, he was just like a father. I can just imagine the old Apostle John." Let me tell you, John, when he got saved, was mean and nasty, and he stayed that way for a while, 'till he grew. Remember I told you little children sometimes can be mean and selfish? Let me tell you what John, who wrote this, was like.

**a. John Had a Violent Disposition**

First of all, he had a violent disposition. The Bible tells us in Mark chapter 3, verse 17, his nickname was "Son of Thunder"—"Son of Thunder" (Mark 3:17). I mean, you wouldn't want to be around him. He had a hair-trigger temper, and he was violent by his disposition.

**b. John Was Selfish**

And, not only that—he was very selfish. You say, "The dear old Apostle John?" Yes, he was selfish. You read in Mark 10, verse 37—he came with other disciples and said, "*Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy glory*" (Mark 10:37). They'd been having a discussion, almost an argument. Who's going to be the greatest in the Kingdom? You wouldn't expect John to be there, but he was there. He said, "Now look, Lord, there are other people around here, but look, here's what I want. And, I want You to give me a special exalted position when You come into Your Glory."

**c. John Was Intolerant**

No, old John was violent. Old John was selfish. And, I'll tell you what else he was: he was very prejudiced. One time, Jesus and John were going through Samaria, and the Samaritans didn't treat Jesus very well. And, look, if you will, in Luke 9—don't turn to it; just jot it down—Luke 9, verses 54 and 55: "*And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, [will You] that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said,*

*[You] know not what manner of spirit ye are of*” (Luke 9:54–55). Now, here was John. He saw Jesus being mistreated. He said, “I’ll tell You what, God—let’s nuke them. I’ll tell You what, Jesus—let’s get a little heavenly napalm and fry them because of the way that they’re acting.” Jesus said, “John, you don’t know what spirit ye are of” (Luke 9:55).

But, here was a man—he was violent; he was selfish; he was intolerant. And, look, if you will, in Luke chapter 9 and verse 49: *“And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said...Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us”* (Luke 9:49–50). Now, they had their little coterie, their little holy huddle. They saw a man who wasn’t a part of their religious club. We would say, “Not a part of our denomination.” And, they said, “Lord, here’s a man over here casting out devils in Your name. Don’t You think that we ought to rebuke him?” “No,” Jesus said, *“He that is not against us is for us”* (Luke 9:50).

Now, if you’ll think about all of these things—here was a man who was violent; here was a man who was selfish; here was a man who was intolerant—and here was a man who you just wouldn’t want to be around him. I hear some of these political ads today, and one of the things they’re asking is, “Who would you most rather drive across the country with—George Bush or John Kerry?” Well, I have an answer for that, but I’m not going to give it this morning.

But, I’m going to tell you something: you would not have wanted to drive across the country with this guy named John before he grew up. And yet, he was saved. As a matter of fact, Jesus enlisted him as a disciple. Now, he grew. As a matter of fact, he’s no longer selfish. When he wrote the Gospel of John, there was a disciple who leaned on Jesus’s breast. That was John. But, John never even mentioned his name. He just said, “That disciple whom Jesus loved.” No longer is he seeking the chief place. John is no longer prejudiced. Now, this time, he comes back to Samaria—in Acts chapter 8, verses 14 and 15: *“Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent...them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 8:14–15). The first time he prayed, he said, “Lord, let fire come down upon them.” The second time he said, “O God, bless these people. Fill them with the Holy Spirit.” He’s no longer prejudiced; he’s no longer intolerant. As a matter of fact, he’s the one who wrote in this same book, 1 John 1, verse 7: *“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another”* (1 John 1:7). John was changed; he was transformed.

## **II. The Means of Maturity**

Now, let’s just shift gears and think a little bit, if we can, about the means of maturity. I’ve talked about the marks of maturity. You move from childhood to young manhood to

fatherhood. Fathers are full of wisdom. They provide; they reproduce. Now, what are the means of maturity? I said, you need to grow up. You need to get strong in the Lord, because you don't want to be that junior high school team against the Green Bay Packers. You need to get strong.

#### **A. There Must Be the Miracle of Life**

Now, number one: There must be the miracle of life. You can't begin to grow until you have life. There's the miracle of life. Then, you begin to grow.

Some years ago, before we moved out here, I had an idea, where we got our children together—actually, I learned this from Peter Lord. He did it in his church—and we gave all of the children in each department a potted plant. All of the plants were exactly the same, as much as they could be the same. And, each department was given a potted plant. Now, one department was told to give that plant water, fertilizer, and sunlight: “That’s what we want you to give your plant.” Another department—we said, “Give it water and fertilizer, but no sunlight.” Another—“Give it water and sunlight, but no fertilizer.” Just kept leaving one ingredient out, except for the one that was given water, sunlight, and fertilizer. And, each week, the kids would bring their plants in and display them. It was amazing to see how some of them—their leaves were down (the ones that didn't get any water at all). Some of them—the leaves were kind of good, but they were yellow. And, some of them were just growing and flourishing (the ones that got water, sunlight, and fertilizer). And, we're trying to teach the kids a spiritual lesson about what it means to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). But, we gave one department a stick—a dead stick—and said, “Now, you give it water. You give it fertilizer, and you give it sunlight. And, see what happens to it.” Well, you know what happened to it. It didn't grow. In order for you to grow, you have to cease being a dead stick. You have to get saved. You have to be born again, when you receive Jesus. There's the miracle of life. Now, that's step number one—to get saved.

#### **B. There Must Be Time**

Step number two: It takes time. There is the passing of time. There is no instant maturity. It's just not so. Now, if you're a squash, you might be mature in 40 days; if you're an oak, you'd be mature in 40 years. Now, God wants you to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Now, the secret of maturity is spending time, and you're not going to be mature overnight.

#### **C. There Must Be Nourishment**

Number three: Growth requires nourishment—nourishment. You're going to have to feed on the Word of God. “I talk unto you, young men, because of the Word of God abides in you” (1 John 2:14). First Peter 2:2: “*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk*

*of the word, that [you] may grow thereby*" (1 Peter 2:2). Church, listen to me: there is no way possible under God's sun, on God's green earth, that you can grow without taking nourishment, and your nourishment is the Word of God.

Ethel Barrett wrote about Dwight L. Moody. You know, Dwight L. Moody was the Billy Graham of his day. And, Ethel Barrett said this about this man who was so mighty: she said that when Dwight L. Moody became a Christian, he developed such a hunger for God's Word, spent so much time reading it and was so quick to obey it, that he became a menace to other believers. His rapid spiritual growth was an embarrassment to certain people, though they had been saved for years and never grew up in Christ. Week after week, the church Moody attended—when he was there week after week, he would share a new experience that he'd had with the Lord. Finally, some of the older saints just couldn't stand being humiliated any more by his life, and they went to his uncle and asked him if he could slow him down and tone him down because he was just feeding on the Word of God, devouring the Word of God, and then he was obeying the Word of God. And then, Ethel Barrett went on to say this about Moody: "his robust spiritual health and abounding energy disturbed their napping. He was just too much. So, while they were sucking their thumbs, he was growing, until he left them far behind. He grew more in a few years than they did in twenty." Isn't that amazing? The Word of God—Moody got hold of the Word of God, and he devoured it.

I read one time where Moody said, "You know, I used to pray to God for faith: 'Lord, I want more faith.'" And, he said, "One day, I read in the Bible where faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17), and he said, "That's the secret. If I want faith, I've got to let the Word of God come into me." And, he stopped praying for faith and asked God to give him an understanding of the Bible, and he said he grew in faith.

Another man of yesteryear was a man named George Miller of Bristol. If you read the life of Miller, it's a life of miracle after miracle after miracle after miracle. And, people think, "Well, what a great prayer warrior he must have been!" And, he was. But, let me tell you what he said about his secret of faith and maturity: he said, "When I come to my quiet time," he said, "I just greet the Lord for a few moments, and then I get into the Word of God. I study the Word of God. I devour the Word of God. I let the Word of God fill me." Well, let me read it in his words: "The first thing I did, after asking in a few words the Lord's blessings upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God, searching into every verse to get a blessing out of it—not for the sake of public ministry of the Word, not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon, but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul." Now, what is food for the inner man? Not prayer, but the Word of God. And, here again, not simple reading of the Word of God so that it only passes through your mind just as water runs through a pipe,



but considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts. That sounds like what Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 15, verse 16: *“Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of [my] heart”* (Jeremiah 15:16). Jeremiah says, “Lord, I devoured Your Word. I fed on Your Word.”

Now, you know how so many of us read the Bible? Like it's a recipe book—and we never eat the meal. One man said to his wife—said, “Why do you call it shopping? You never buy anything.” She said, “Why do you call it fishing? You never catch anything.” And, some people just kind of window-shop through the Bible. They say, “Oh, what a nice verse that is! Oh, what a great verse that is! Oh, here's one for the refrigerator.” Friend, feed on the Word of God. That's what Miller did. He became mighty in faith. That's what Moody did. He became mighty in faith. There must be nourishment.

#### **D. There Must Be Discipline and Exercise**

Now, number four: Growth demands discipline or exercise. Hebrews 5, verse 14: *“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even [to] those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”* (Hebrews 5:14). Now, he's talking about people who become full-grown, and he's talking about your spiritual senses that get exercised, just like in the physical realm. Your physical body, when it gets exercised, it toughens and hardens.

Now folks, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but I've been in the church long enough, been a pastor long enough, to know that most Christians are flabby—they're flabby. They have no strength. They have no biceps. They have no vitality, because they have no exercise. They come on Sunday morning, and sit and soak, and think that by being here this morning, they're serving God. We call this the “service,” but it's not the service. The service begins when you walk out those doors. And, when you begin to serve God, you're going to grow, and you're going to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

Now, I know that if you're a baby Christian right now, you can't do everything. But, you can do something. I know if you're a young man today and the Word of God abides in you, you still haven't reached the fatherhood stage, where maybe you can reproduce. But, I tell folks when we have the Singing Christmas Tree, “Look, read the Word of God. Don't worry about what you don't understand. Obey what you do understand, and before long you'll be understanding what you didn't understand.” And, the same thing is true about service: don't worry about what you can't do. Find out what you can do and begin to do it, and you will grow. It takes life to grow. It takes nourishment to grow. It takes exercise to grow. But, if you're a stick, you're not going to grow at all.



## Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. Now, you take an inventory this morning. Are you a little child, saying, “Oh, thank God—my sins are forgiven”? Well, I thank God, too—I thank God, too, that your sin is forgiven. But, there’s more to that. Are you a young man—a worker and a warrior? This church couldn’t exist without workers and warriors, but that’s not your final goal. Your final goal is to be like the Lord Jesus Christ—or, actually, like the Father. Jesus said, “*I and my Father are one*” (John 10:30). You need to be the kind of a Christian who can reproduce, the kind of a Christian that has fatherly wisdom, the kind of a Christian that not only can meet your needs, but, as a father, meet the needs of others.

Now friend, would you pray? Say, “God, help me to be a growing Christian. If You helped old John to grow—You took this man who was selfish, and this man who was intolerant, this man who was violent, and You made him into such a wonderful apostle—Lord, You can do that for me. Lord, help me to grow. Lord, write the message, this morning, upon my heart. And, help me not just to hear it, but God, I want to be a growing Christian.” Would you pray that?

Now, while these are praying... Maybe you’re a stick this morning—that is, you’ve never received spiritual life; you need to be saved. And, I’ve got wonderful news for you—glorious news: God loves you, and He wants to save you. You don’t have to beg Him to save you. He has promised to do it if you will trust Him. Believe that Christ, the Son of God, paid your sin debt with His shed blood on the cross. Believe that—believe that God raised Him from the dead. Believe that. And now, receive Him into your heart as your Lord and Savior. Do it. The Bible says, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and [you will] be saved*” (Acts 16:31). Pray a prayer like this: “Lord Jesus, thank You for dying for me. Thank You that You hung on that cross in agony and blood. Now, Lord Jesus, this moment, I receive You into my life as my Lord and Master. Take control of my life. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And Lord, I will live for You. Lord, I’ll not be ashamed of You. Lord, I’ll make this public because of what You’ve done for me. Amen and amen.”

Now, look up here. We’re going to sing what we call an “invitational hymn.” And, precious friends who prayed that prayer with me—you said, “Lord Jesus, right now, come into my heart. Forgive my sin; save me, Jesus”—if you meant that, I want you to leave your seat and come forward. Now, why do I want you to do that? If you prayed and meant it, you’re as saved back there as you would be up here. But, how do we know that you meant it? One of the ways that you can know is, are you willing to acknowledge it? For Jesus said, “If you’re ashamed of Me and 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). But, Jesus said, “If you will confess Me before

men, I will confess you before My Father” (Matthew 10:32).

So, here’s what we’re going to do: we’re going to ask the ministers of our church to come and stand at the head of each of these aisles. We’re going to ask our deacons and prayer warriors if they’ll just come forward, ready to help anybody. And then, we’re going to ask you, when we sing, just to leave your seat, and come forward, and say to the minister, “I am trusting Christ.” What will happen is this: we’ll rejoice with you; we’ll go to a quieter place with you, give you some scripture to stand on, and seal it in prayer. It’ll take just a few minutes. It’ll be one of the most wonderful things you’ve ever done.

Now, there are others of you this morning—I want to invite you to come forward. If you need a church home, beloved, listen to me: Bellevue is a church where you can grow, and I’m grateful for that. I don’t say that boastfully, but I say it thankfully. If you need a church home, and if this is where God speaks to your heart—this is where God ministers to you—and you’re saved and know it, I want you to step out and come today and say to the minister, “I want to place my membership here.” And, we’ll tell you how you may become a member of this wonderful church.

Now, if you’re in the balcony, rather than coming down here to the front, if you’ll just go to that banner over there that says, “Redeemer,” in that corner, or the one that says, “Messiah” over here, there’ll be a friend waiting to welcome you. And, when we have the invitation, respectfully, I’m going to ask that no one leave during the invitation unless it is a true emergency. Stay with us; pray with us. If you’re with a friend who needs to make a decision, you might say to that friend, “If you want to go forward, I’ll go with you.” Maybe just put your hand on their hand and give it a squeeze, and that’s what it means.

Let’s stand one more time for prayer. Father God, I pray for these today who have prayed and asked Jesus into their heart. Help them, dear God, today, in this service, to acknowledge You. Lord Jesus, help them not to be ashamed of You. And Lord, there are brothers and sisters here that need the fellowship of this church. Help them to step out and even lead the way for these others who need to come and acknowledge Jesus. Thank You, Lord. Thank You, Jesus. Amen.

Now, as we sing, you step out and come.

# How to Be a Growing Christian

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 31, 2004**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 2:12–14**

## Outline

### Introduction

- A. Maturity Does Not Mean Health
- B. Maturity Does Not Mean Giftedness
- C. Maturity is Christlikeness
- I. The Marks of Maturity
  - A. The Childhood Stage
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## Introduction

Take God's Word and turn, if you will, to 1 John—that's back toward the back of your Bible—chapter 2. And, while you're turning, I want to ask you a personal question, and I want you to answer it. But, I don't want you to answer it out loud, because you might tend not to be as honest if you answer out loud. But, I want you to answer it sincerely and honestly. Here's the question: Are you a growing Christian? Now, I didn't ask, have you been saved? I didn't ask, have you grown? Are you, right now, a growing Christian? Now, a wise man said—and I agree with him: "to cease to be better is to cease to be good." And, if you're not growing, then, in a sense, you are backsliding. And, I want to help you today to learn to be a growing Christian. Now, that is a mature person. Now, we're going to be unorthodox this morning and only have two points, but there are a lot of subpoints, so don't get too excited.

First of all, I want you to think with me about the marks of maturity. Now, take your Bible and look here, if you will, please, in 1 John chapter 2. Let's begin reading in verse

12: *"I write unto you, little children"*—now, just underscore that, *"little children"*—*"because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake"*—then verse 13—*"I write unto you, fathers"*—underscore the word *"fathers"*—*"because ye have known him that is from the beginning"*—and then—*"I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one"* (1 John 2:12–13). There you have it: children, young men, and fathers. Now, all of us are in one of those stages. If we're saved, we're in the childhood stage, we're in the young man stage, or we're in the father stage.

Now, let's think a little bit about this. What is our ultimate goal? It's to become spiritual fathers—or, if you're a woman here, to be a spiritual mother. Now, what does that mean? Well, that means to be like Jesus, because Jesus said, *"I and my Father are one"* (John 10:30). Jesus said, *"When you've seen Me, you've seen the Father"* (John 14:9). And so, what is the goal of my ministry? The same as Paul's was when Paul said in Colossians, *"That [I] may present every man perfect in Christ"* (Colossians 1:28). Now, the word *"perfect"*—*teleos*—that doesn't mean *"sinless."* You can have a perfect rose. That doesn't mean a sinless rose; it means *"mature, in full bloom."* God wants you to become mature. Now, there is a little child stage, and I thank God for that. And, there is a young man stage, and I thank God for that. But, we are to be progressing on to Christlikeness.

What is the proof of my ministry? What is the goal of my ministry? Is it buildings? Is it crowds? Is it budgets or even baptisms? No. I will be used of God if I can help you to be more like Jesus. That's it. *"That we may present every man perfect in Christ"* (Colossians 1:28). The test of my ministry is this: Are those who are sitting under my preaching progressing more and more in maturity, becoming more and more like God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ?

#### A. **Maturity Does Not Mean Health**

Now, maturity—let me tell you what maturity is not. Maturity is not health. You can be healthy and not mature. A five-year-old boy may be perfectly healthy and totally immature. So, if you're saved and born again and that's as far as you've gone, and you're sitting here this morning as a new Christian (like some of those that we baptized this morning in the early service and in this service—they can be spiritually healthy, full of the Holy Ghost, but they are not yet mature).

#### B. **Maturity Does Not Mean Giftedness**

And, maturity does not mean giftedness. You can be gifted spiritually, or you can be gifted naturally with talents, but that doesn't mean you're mature. The Apostle Paul spoke to his childlike church, which was Corinth, and he said, *"I [cannot] speak unto you as unto spiritual, but...unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ"* (1 Corinthians 3:1).

They had never grown up. It was his carnal church, but boy, were they gifted. Paul had to say to them, “[You] *come behind in no gift*” (1 Corinthians 1:7). They had spiritual gifts, but because they were immature, they were using gifts like toys rather than tools. And, they were just immature, but they were gifted.

### C. **Maturity is Christlikeness**

A mature person is like the Lord Jesus Christ.

## I. **The Marks of Maturity**

Now, let’s look at these three stages and see which one of them that you fit in, whether it’s childhood, adolescence, or young manhood or fatherhood. Now, I want to say, if you’re saved today, those are the bookends you’re in between—some of these... You’re one of these.

### A. **The Childhood Stage**

Now, look, if you will now, in verse 12. He speaks there in verse 12 of little children—look: “*I write unto you, little children*”—now, watch this—“*because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake*” (1 John 2:12). These are baby Christians. And, what does a baby Christian do? A baby Christian lives in the realm of his feelings. He says, “Glory, hallelujah! At last my sin is forgiven, buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness, as far as the East is from the West. Oh, thank You, Jesus, for saving me. My sin—not in part, but the whole—is nailed to the cross, and I bear them no more.” And, that’s legitimate—that’s legitimate. There is a legitimate childhood. In order to grow, you’ve got to start as a child. And, the way you start as a child is how? To be saved, to have your sin forgiven.

And so, children are wonderful. I can attest to that. I love children. I love the little children of this church. They’re precious to me—they really are. I love them, every one. And, I am an industrial-strength, bona fide, certified father and grandfather. And, because of that, I know little children. But, I’m going to tell you something about little children: while they’re wonderful, they’ve got a lot of faults. Little children are selfish. Have you ever noticed? Little children are rude. They will burp in your face and never say, “Excuse me.” Little children—they need to be served; they need to be waited upon. They’re inconsiderate. They’ll wake you up in the middle of the night and not think a thing about it. That’s little children. I’ll tell you one other thing about little children: sometimes they’re just plain mean.

Our two youngest grandchildren, Stephen Paul, who lives in Spain, and our grandson over here, Andrew—both very young. And, Stephen Paul was in Spain, and his cousin Andrew was here in Memphis. And, we could hardly wait to get them together

so they could be wonderful playmates. And so, when Stephen Paul arrived from Spain on a furlough, and Andrew was there, we put them down side by side, sat back and said, “Now, let’s watch them play.” Immediately, Stephen Paul moved over and bit Andrew. That’s a child.

Now, let me tell you something: if you take those characteristics of childhood and just say, “That’s what a Christian is—like that,” somebody would say, “Well, if that’s what a Christian is, I don’t want to be one.” Someone might look at a child and say, “If that’s what a child is like, I don’t want to be a human being.” Now folks, don’t judge Jesus by newborn babes. They’re saved, but they’ve got to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). And, don’t be judgmental of these children.

Do you know what I used to think? I used to think—and I tell our Discovery Class this—I used to think that a great church was a church where everybody is a Spirit-filled, mature believer. That, my friend, is not a great church. That is a failing church. Why? Well, would you say a great family is a family where they’re all grandfathers, grandmothers, and parents, but no children being born? No—no. This church ought to be a great maternity ward, where, when we preach and give the invitation, we hear the cry of newborn babes who are coming and saying an everlasting “yes” to Jesus and they are newborn, Heaven-born and Heaven-bound. And, thank God that the church is a maternity ward. But, it’s a sad thing when a church stays a maternity ward and no longer is it a maternity ward but becomes a rest home where people just get saved and they never grow up. Can you imagine a 45-year-old man being rocked to sleep, sucking his thumb? Well, that’s like some of the members of this church: you’ve been little children for 10, 20, 30 years. I say there is a legitimate childhood, and the Bible says we’re to be childlike, but we’re not to be childish. Now, little children know the thrilling wonders of childhood. Everything is new to them; everything is glorious to them, and that is wonderful.

## B. The Adolescence Stage

But now, we move to the next stage, and that’s the young man stage. Look, if you will, in verse 13—the last part of verse 13: *“I write unto you, young men, because [you] have overcome the wicked one”* (1 John 2:13). And then, look in the last part of verse 14: *“I have written unto you, young men, because [you] are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and [you] have overcome the wicked one”* (1 John 2:14).

Now, there are the thrilling wonders of childhood; but friend, there is the triumphant warfare of young manhood, when you’re no longer a child but you become a warrior and a worker. You’re progressing. You’re no longer a little child, but you’re what the Bible

would call “spiritually a young man.” Young men can fight battles, and we need to pray for those who are fighting battles for us today. They’re warriors.

Young men are workers, because it says they are strong. I thank God for the strong people in this church. I thank God for the prayer warriors. I thank God for the workers. Now, Bellevue could not exist without the workers that we have today. And if you will open your eyes, you will find out that there are spiritual workers everywhere. If you left a child in the nursery this morning, you met some nursery workers. Let’s say a good word for the nursery workers. Now, you really ought to appreciate them. You wouldn’t want all those babies in this service. We wouldn’t be able to preach. That’s why we have the nursery; it’s a “bawl room”: they get over there and bawl. I’m grateful for these workers: wiping little noses, changing dirty diapers, giving a glass of water, some juice. They’re workers. These ushers are workers. These choir members and this orchestra—they are workers. We have people up there in the sound booth doing all this projection, and giving the sound, and so forth. By the way, I’m in your hands, sir. Take care of me. Now, they’re workers, and I’m so grateful for the workers. When you leave the building, you’ll see people out there directing traffic—members of this church. They are workers. Thank God for the workers, and thank God for the warrior.

Now, how did the warriors get strong? Well, look at the Word of God, and you’re going to find out how they got strong. Look in chapter 2, verse 14: *“I have written unto you, young men, because [you] are strong, and the word of God abideth in you”* (1 John 2:14). We’re going to say more about this later on, but you can’t be strong—you can’t be a worker or a warrior—without the Word of God abiding in you (not just that you read it, but that it abides in you). You’re transformed by the Word of God. First Peter 2:2: *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that [you] may grow thereby”* (1 Peter 2:2). Now, if you’re not into the Word of God, you’re going to be a weakling.

I want you to imagine something: I want you to imagine on this side of the football field are the Tennessee Titans; I want you to imagine over here on this side are a lot of little children, and they’re trying to play football—Tennessee Titans and 11 little children. “Well,” you say, “Pastor, that wouldn’t be fair. And, this team will never play children,” and you’re right. They would have too much honor. But, the devil has no honor at all. He wants to line up against spiritual children; he wants to come against them. And, that’s the reason he keeps them from the Word of God, because he knows that if they get into the Word of God, they can overcome him. So, he wants you to be a pushover, and you may be. You may wonder, “Why can’t I overcome?” Well, it may be that you’re neglecting the Word of God. Now, you can overcome the devil. You can be a worker, and you can be a warrior.



### C. **The Fatherhood Stage**

Now, here's the third stage, and that's the fatherhood stage that brings the tested wisdom of fatherhood. Look in verse 13 here: *"I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning"* (1 John 2:13). And then, look in verse 14: *"I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning"* (1 John 2:14). Verse 13: *"I write unto you, fathers, for ye have known him that is from the beginning"* (1 John 2:13). Now, what's he saying here, saying it twice?

Fatherhood—spiritual fatherhood—is having an intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ. Spiritual fathers have progressed from childhood to young manhood to fatherhood.

Now, what is the mark of a spiritual father? Well, it's maturity. And, what is the mark of maturity?

#### **1. A Father Reproduces**

A father reproduces. Do you have any spiritual children? Do you? Is there anybody that you've brought to the Lord Jesus Christ? A father reproduces.

#### **2. A Father Provides**

Not only does a father reproduce—a father provides. He takes care of his family. I thank God for the providers in this church. Sunday after next, we're going to have a Love Offering, and that's what this tent is about up here. We'll talk more about that later on. We're going to be talking about lengthening and strengthening. And some, who are spiritual fathers, will count it a great joy to give in the Love Offering. Do you know one of the greatest joys that I have, as an earthly father, is to give to my children? I love to do that. I love to be a provider, where I can.

#### **3. A Father Has Wisdom**

But, not only do they reproduce and not only do they provide, but fathers have wisdom, because they're mature. They have known the Father. And, you can come to them for advice and wisdom, and they can give it. Do people come to you because they see the wisdom in your life? They ask you questions to have their needs met through what God has put into your heart? This is what God's plan is for you—that you reach the fatherhood stage.

Now, I want to be very careful here. We do not change gears from childhood to young manhood to fatherhood. No, we just simply add young manhood to childhood, and then we add fatherhood to young manhood. In every man, there ought to be a little child and a young man in every father. You see, these are great traits that are in a mature Christian. There is the wonder of childhood. Never lose the wonder. I was sitting here this morning on that thing, thinking about the glories of Heaven—how great this is going to be. I stand in awe of that. There are the wonders of childhood. There's the work

and warfare of young manhood. And so, a father is really a composite of all of these things. **You're not like the washing machine that goes through cycles—no.** Listen, in every spiritual father, there ought to be a spiritual child and a spiritual youth. And so, we keep the thrill of childhood. We keep the strength and the warfare and the service of manhood. But, we add to that this fatherhood, and we go on progressing and progressing.

Now, God's plan for you is that you be mature, that you grow up, that you not be the devil's plaything, or that you not be a disgrace to the Lord Jesus Christ. And, somebody will say, "If that's a Christian, I don't want to be one."

## **II. The Means of Maturity**

All right. Now, we've talked about the marks. Let's talk about the means. How can you grow? Because that's the title of the message: "How to be a Growing Christian." And, I want to tell you the things that are necessary if you are going to grow.

Well, before I do that, you may think that growth for you is not possible. Well, you know who wrote this First Epistle of John? The Apostle John. When you think of the Apostle John, what do you think about? What is the image? Just kind of conjure him up in your mind. What do you think that dear old John would be like? You'd say, "Well, he'd be a father." Yes. You kind of picture him as white-haired. You picture him as with a kind face. That's what we think of: a saint—a saint. And, he is, was—well, will evermore be. But, he wasn't always that way. Did you know that he had a hair-trigger temper? Do you know what his nickname was? "Son of Thunder." You wouldn't want to be around him—Son of Thunder. I'll tell you something else about the Apostle John: he was selfish. He came to Jesus and said, "Now, when You get into the Kingdom, I want to sit on Your right hand." Can you imagine that—I mean, saying, "Lord, give me the highest and the best place"? He did that. And, not only was he violent and selfish, but he was intolerant. One time, Jesus and the disciples were going through Samaria, and the Samaritans didn't act right; and so, John said to Jesus, "Lord, shall we call down fire from Heaven and destroy them like Elijah did? Lord, let's nuke them. Let's pour a little heavenly napalm on them. Let's turn them into bacon—the way they're acting." Jesus had to say, "John, you don't know what manner of spirit you are of" (Luke 9:55). But, he was prejudiced against the Samaritans, and he was intolerant. One time, he came to Jesus and said, "Master, we saw a man casting out demons in Your name, and he was not of us. Shall we forbid him?" (Luke 9:49). Jesus said, "Leave him alone. He that is not against us is with us" (Luke 9:50). But, John was thinking, "Well, you know, he's not a member of my denomination. He does little things different." And so, here was John, who was intolerant.

Now, I hear a lot of the political advertisements today, saying, “As you choose a candidate, ask this question: Which person would you love to ride across America with in your front seat? Who would you like to have for company?” Well, I know who I’d like to ride with. But, I’ll tell you one thing: if I had been back in Bible times and I had a choice before John grew up, I would not want to ride with John. I would not want to ride with a selfish, angry, intolerant, prejudiced person. That’s what he was. But, he grew. And, you know, he was no longer angry. He’s called “the beloved disciple.” No longer is he selfish. As a matter of fact, when he writes the Gospel of John, he won’t even use his name. He just calls himself “that disciple that Jesus loved.” He is so self-effacing. He is no longer prejudiced. The next time the disciples are coming to Jerusalem, this time John prays for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. First time: “Burn them up, Lord.” This time: “Lord, fill them with the Spirit. Let them have heavenly fire, the fire of the Spirit.” This man has been changed. He’s no longer intolerant of other people. He speaks there, in this book that we have here, about having fellowship one with another. He has become a mature person. Now, if that man can become a mature person, don’t you think you can? Hey folks, God wants you to grow.

Now, may I give you the principles of growth? Are you ready for them?

#### **A. There Must Be the Miracle of Life**

All right. Number one—here’s the first principle of growth, the means of maturity: there must be the miracle of life—the miracle of life. You cannot grow without life. The Bible says in 1 Peter 2:2: “*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that [you] may grow thereby.*” But, you’ve got to be a newborn babe.

Some years ago, in the older buildings downtown, I had an idea that we would give the children some potted plants from the children’s departments. And, each department got a potted plant. All the plants were, as much as possible, identical—the same kind of plant, same size pot. And, one department was told to give the plants water, sunlight, and fertilizer. The next was told to give them water and sunlight but no fertilizer. The next was told to give them fertilizer and sunlight but no water and so forth. You had all of these different combinations, but only one got water, sunlight, and fertilizer. And, each week the kids would bring out their plants to see how they were doing. And, I was trying to teach what the principles of growth are and how you have to have a balance in order to grow. But, one thing we did for one class—we gave one class a dead stick. And, we said, “Now, we want you to give this stick water, sunlight, and fertilizer.” But, you know, it never grew. You know why it never grew? It never had life. Now, there are some of you here—you might have the mistaken idea that you can grow without a spiritual birth. It is an absolute impossibility. You, first of all, as a newborn babe, you

*“desire the sincere milk of the word, that [you] may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2).*

And, let me say something else: there are some of you who may think that you’re not good enough to give your heart to Christ. And, you say, “Well, I’m going to get better, and then I’ll give my heart to Christ.” That would be like somebody saying, “I’m going to grow up and then get born.” No, you come just as you are—a babe; not even a babe in Christ, just a sinner, a failure, whatever you think you are. You come to Jesus just as you are and get born. And then, that’s when you begin to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). So, the first requirement, if you’re going to grow, is the miracle of life.

## **B. You Must Receive Spiritual Nourishment**

Now, the second requirement, if you’re going to grow, is this: you must receive spiritual nourishment. Remember what John said? “Young men, you’re strong because the Word of God abides in you” (1 John 2:14). You remember that? Now folks, listen to me. You are going to be spiritual pigmies—you’re going to be bantam Baptists, you’re going to be spiritual weaklings—if you don’t get into the Word of God.

Ethel Barrett wrote about Dwight L. Moody. Dwight L. Moody was the Billy Graham of his day. Dwight L. Moody was a man mightily used of God. His biographer said, “He took two continents and shook them toward Jesus Christ.” What was the secret of his life? He’d never been to seminary. He was saved when he was 19 years of age. But, he, as a newborn babe, desired the sincere milk of the Word (1 Peter 2:2). He began to feed on the Word of God; he began to feast on the Word of God. As a matter of fact, he said of himself, “I used to want faith and pray for faith, and I didn’t seem to have the faith that I felt I needed or wanted.” And then, he said, “I read in the Bible where faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). He said, “I stopped asking God for faith, and I began to pray, ‘God, help me to understand Your Word.’” And, he said, “I felt an enormous faith growing in my life when I got into the Word of God.”

Ethel Barrett said about Dwight L. Moody, “He devoured the Bible. He loved the Bible. He read the Bible. And, not only did he read it—he obeyed it, and he began to grow so fast that he grew past the other saints in the church who’d been there 10, 15, 20, 30 years.” He just went right past them, and they were intimidated by it. Every meeting he would have a new story to tell about what Jesus was doing, a new insight into the Word of God. It so aggravated those people they went to Dwight L. Moody’s uncle and said, “Can you tone him down?” Now, what was happening is they were suffering, in comparison. What caused Moody to grow so? Well, he was feeding on the Word of God. And friend, *he wasn’t just reading the cookbook; he was eating the meal.*

And, we need to learn to do that when we feed on the Word of God.

You know, some people have Bible study like some women shop. You know, they go out shopping, and they come home—just shopping, don't buy anything. One man said to his wife, "Why do you call it shopping? You never buy anything." She said, "Why do you call it fishing? You never catch anything." But, some people just sort of window-shop through the Bible: "Oh, what a sweet verse that is. Oh, what a glorious verse that is. I'm going to put that one on my refrigerator." No, here was Moody, who devoured the Word of God and put it into practice. Jeremiah said, "I did find Thy words, and I ate them" (Jeremiah 15:16).

Another man of yesteryear was George Müller of Bristol, England. Müller saw miracle after miracle after miracle happen in his life. And, somebody asked him, "Müller, what is the secret of your faith?" because he was known for faith—incredible faith. And, he ran these orphanages and had to raise millions and millions of dollars for them. He said almost the same thing that Moody said. He said, "When I start my quiet time in the morning," he said, "I greet the Lord, and then I turn to the Word of God." And, he said, "I look at the Word of God. I turn over every leaf. I consider every verse. I meditate on the Word of God." And, Müller said, "I find this faith growing in my heart and in my life."

Now, what does it take to grow? Number one: It takes a birth. Number two: It takes nourishment—or, you must feed on the Word of God. If you don't, you're going to be a spiritual weakling all of your life.

### C. **There Must Be Exercise**

Now, number three—number three: To grow requires nourishment, and it requires discipline or exercise. You've got to exercise. You know, the Bible says over there in Hebrews chapter 5—he talks of those who through growing "*have their senses exercised to discern [between] good and evil*" (Hebrews 5:14). This word "exercise" used there in Hebrews chapter 5 is the word we get our English word "gymnasium" from.

Now, you want to grow? You want to be strong in the physical realm? You have to exercise. You want to be strong in the spiritual realm? You have to exercise. You want to be a warrior and a worker? You have to exercise. And, there's no easy way. Would you like to be a warrior? You can start today. Go to war against the devil. Make sure your heart is clean and pure, and then you can pray as a spiritual warrior. Pray for your pastor. Pray for your nation. Pray for this congregation. Pray for Christians worldwide who are being persecuted. Become a warrior. Become a worker.

Remember all those workers that I listed a while back? You can become a worker. You say, "Well Pastor, I can't do what they do. I can't sing in the choir. I can't play the

harp like this precious lady did today. I can't do what these people do. I just don't have the ability to teach." Now, come up here close, and let me tell you something: there's something you can do. And, you do what you can do, and stop worrying about what you can't do or what others do. You find a job and go to it. And, if you don't have a job and you say, "I can't find one," come see us. I'm going to tell you something, friend: you get your heart right, you get your beliefs right, you let us train you, and let us know who you are—we'll wear you out. There is a place of service for you. And, just because you can't do what somebody else can do, or just because you can't do everything, there is something you can do. You need to start exercising so you can grow.

#### **D. There Must Be Time**

Now, God did not bring you to this church to come here on Sunday morning and sit, and soak, and sour. Now, when I was going through that list, I left off an ingredient, and you saw it up there: it takes time—it takes time.

Now, I talked about how fast Moody grew, and I'm grateful that he grew fast. But still, it took time. There is no overnight maturity. You can be instantly spiritual. Just receive Christ, repent of your sins, and God will fill you with the Holy Spirit. You'll be instantly spiritual, but you will not be instantly mature. *If God wants to grow a squash, He may take two months; if He wants to grow an oak, He takes 40 years. It takes time.* And, don't get discouraged if you're not mature overnight. But, you've got to start growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Day by day by day, by week by week by week, by year by year by year, you will find yourself progressing on to maturity. And then, when you are, you'll have the thrill of being a child in the wonder of it all. You will have the victories of young manhood, warriors and workers. You will have the wisdom of a spiritual father—able to reproduce, able to provide, able to give wisdom. That's what you need, and that's what God wants to have for you.

Now, are you content just to come here and listen to preaching and that's all? God have mercy on you. Ask Him to forgive you. Now, we call this the "service." This is not the service. We call it that, but the service begins when you walk out those doors, amen? Find a job. Ask the Lord Jesus to use you, and quit being a spiritual baby.

### **Conclusion**

Bow your heads in prayer. Every head bowed, and every eye closed. And now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would you take an inventory? I asked you at the beginning of this message, are you a growing Christian? and asked you to answer that question honestly. Are you a growing Christian? Now, if you said, "No, I'm not a growing



Christian,” when you were perfectly honest, would you pray this time, “Now Lord, make me a growing Christian. Lord God, help me to take the nourishment that I need. Help me to be patient and take the time that is necessary. Lord, help me to find a job, a place of service in this church”? And, those of you who’ve never been saved—you’re like the stick that I talked about. You can’t begin to grow until you get saved. That’s the reason you need to stop trying to be good enough to be saved. That would be like telling a baby to grow up and then get born. You start just as you are, and you will grow.

Now, if you’re not saved—and to be saved means that your sins are forgiven; to be saved means that Jesus Christ lives in your heart; to be saved means that you have heaven for your home, power in your life—if you’re not saved, I want to help you to be saved right now, and I want to guide you in a prayer. And, in this prayer, you can ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart. I invite you to pray this way: “Dear God, I need to be saved, and I want to be saved. Jesus, You shed Your blood on the cross to pay my sin debt. I believe that, Jesus, and I am so grateful. Jesus, You rose from the dead, and I believe that. I believe You’re the Son of God, and You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Lord Jesus, this moment, right now, with all of my heart—right now, this moment, with all of my heart. Come into my heart and take control of my life. I receive You as my Master, and I give my life back to You as Your servant. Begin now, Jesus, to make me the person You want me to be so I can begin to grow in the likeness of Jesus. And, Lord Jesus, help me never, ever to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.”



# When Love Is Wrong

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 24, 1979**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 2:15–17**

*“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”*

1 JOHN 2:15

## Outline

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles please and turn to 1 John chapter 2. Now we’re in a series of studies in 1 John on Wednesday night. And if you’re not a Wednesday night attendee, you’re missing a blessing. I imagine in a total attendance on many Wednesday nights, if not most Wednesday nights, we have at least 2,000 here on Wednesday nights, and all of our studies put together. And we have such a time as we study in 1 John. We’re in a series of messages called “Blessed Assurance,” from 1 John.

But last Wednesday night, we preached something else, and so I am moving last

Wednesday's message to Sunday morning, and perhaps it will help some of you to be excited about the book of 1 John, and you'll want to come next Wednesday night as we continue our study on the subject, "Blessed Assurance."

Today our subject title is this: "When Love Is Wrong." And I want to read 1 John chapter 2, beginning in verse 15: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever"* (1 John 2:15–17).

Now the Christian is not supposed to love everything. He's only to love that which God loves. Let me give you some scriptures to jot in the margin. Psalm 97 and verse 10: *"Ye that love the LORD, hate evil"* (Psalm 97:10). That's a good one, isn't it? Let me give you another one—Romans chapter 12 and verse 9: *"Let love be without [hypocrisy]. Abhor that which is evil"* (Romans 12:9). And the love that does not hate evil is a hypocritical love, the love that does not hate evil. If a man says, "I love God," and he does not hate sin, that man's a hypocrite. That's what the Bible says, *"Let love be without [hypocrisy]. Abhor that which is evil."*

You see, dear friend, if you love health, you're going to hate germs. If you love flowers, you hate weeds. If you love cleanliness, you hate dirt. If you love God, you hate sin. And so the Bible says, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."*

And so what in the world is worldliness? And why should a Christian not love this world? Well, three reasons. Number one: because of the character of the world—what it is. Number two: because of the corruption of the world—what it does. Number three: because of the condemnation of the world—where it is headed. These are three reasons why we ought not to love this world.

## **I. The Character of the World—What It Is**

Now let's think for a moment about the character of the world—what it is.

### **A. The Meaning of the Word *World***

When the Bible says, *"Love not the world,"* what does the Bible mean? Now there are at least three meanings of the word *world* in the Bible.

#### **1. Not the Physical World**

In the first place, the Bible speaks of the world as the planet earth. And there's nothing wrong with loving that. There's nothing wrong with loving what God has made. Not the physical world is wrong. The Bible says in Acts chapter 17, verse 24, "It is God who made the world and all things in it" (Acts 17:24). So physical, material things are not bad. There are some people who think that if you love physical, material things

you're sinful.

Oh no, dear friend, there's nothing wrong with loving God's creative act—the birds, the bees, the fleas, the trees. They are all from God, and God made all things. And when God made this world, God stepped back, and God said, "It is good" (Genesis 1:31). And so don't equate sinfulness with physical, material things.

## **2. Not the Populated World**

And when the Bible says, "*Love not the world*," he's not talking about the physical world, and he's not talking about the populated world. He's not talking about the world of people. Now the Bible says concerning that world, in John chapter 3 and verse 16—you know it—"For God so loved the world,"—that is, the world of people—"that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). That's how much God loves that world. And let me tell you there is no man on the face of this earth that you ought not to love if you're a Christian—no man on the face of the earth that you ought not to love. And when the Bible says, "*Love not the world*," he's not telling us to hate people.

Well you say, "Some people are not very lovely." That's right. Look around and you'll meet some of them. And go look in the mirror and you'll meet one. Now let me tell you something, friend. None of us are lovely by nature. The Bible says, "*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). And so we're not to hate people. We're to hate whiskey, but we're to love the bartender. We're to hate pornography, but we must love the pornographer. We're to hate dope, but we love the dope pusher. And we're to love all people, because they're precious in Jesus' sight.

## **3. A Cosmos**

And so when the Bible says, "*Love not the world*," he's not talking about the physical world; he's not talking about the populated world. But the word that is used here is the word *cosmos*. "*Love not the [cosmos]*." Now what is he talking about here? This word *cosmos* means "a system"—"a system." It's a word that brings to mind an organization. And here when the Bible uses the word *cosmos*, it's talking about Satan's system that is organized against our Lord, or against our Lord and God's Christ. The word *cosmetic* comes from this word. What's a woman doing when she's putting on her cosmetics? She's systematizing her face. She's putting it in order. The word *cosmos* means "order." We talk about a *cosmopolitan* place. What does that mean—*cosmopolitan* area? That is an area that's organized. You see, when the Bible uses the word *cosmos*, it means "an order," or "a system." In this particular sense, it means Satan's order that is set against the things of God.

And so I want you to notice some things about the character of this satanic system that is set against God.

## **B. The Purpose of This World's System**

First of all, notice the purpose of the world. And let me say, incidentally, we use the word *world* in that sense all of the time. We talk about the world of sports. We talk about the world of politics. We talk about the world of business. Now I'm not saying the world of sports, politics, and business are evil, in and of themselves, but I'm just saying that's the way we use the word *world*. We mean the system of business, the system of sports, the system of politics.

Well there is a satanic system also that the Bible calls this world. And I want you to notice the character of the world. First thing I want you to notice is the purpose of the world. What is the purpose of the world? It is to oppose the Word of God. Look in verse 16: *"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father."*

Now anything that is not of the Father is a part of this world system. Anything that does not further God's plan and God's desire and God's purposes. And so the purpose of Satan's system is to oppose all that is godly and all that is righteous. And that system is working. Sometimes people foolishly say, "Well, God's in His heaven and all is right with the world." Well, God is in His heaven, but all is not right in this world, I'll guarantee you that. For further information, read any newspaper. The purpose of the world's system is to oppose the work of God, to be against that which the Father is for.

## **C. The Prince of This World's System**

Now I want you to notice not only the purpose of this world's system, but the prince of this world's system. And the prince of this world's system is the devil himself. Turn to the back of 1 John—1 John chapter 5 and verse 19: *"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness"* (1 John 5:19).

Now literally this says, "The whole world lieth in the wicked one"—"in the wicked one." And who is the wicked one? The devil himself. Jesus called him *"the prince of this world,"* in John chapter 12 and verse 31 (John 12:31). And as *"the prince of this world,"* he has organized it. The Bible says, *"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, [and] powers...[and] spiritual wickedness in high places"* (Ephesians 6:12). And so Satan is the organizer and he is the motivating force behind this system that we call the world.

## **D. The People of This World's System**

It's purpose? To oppose God. It's prince? The devil. Now I want you to notice its people. Because this world's system has many people in it. And we are to love the people, but we are not to love the system. Notice in Ephesians chapter 2—let's just turn to that because it's worth turning to—Ephesians chapter 2. I want you to notice how that Satan uses people to work out his system.

Now how does the Holy Spirit work in the world? Well, the Holy Spirit uses people. The Holy Spirit is in me right now. The Holy Spirit is speaking through me right now. Someone has well said, “He has no hands but our hands. He has no feet but our feet. He has no eyes but our eyes. He has no lips but our lips to do His work.” And God the Holy Spirit in the human spirit is energizing my mind, my body, my emotions, my will, to preach and to bring the message.

Now in the same way, the evil spirit of Satan works in the hearts and the lives of the people who are a part of this worldly system to oppose the work of God. Notice how Paul put it in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 and 2: “*And you hath he [made alive], who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world,*”—now notice he’s talking about this world now, this worldly system—“*according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the [sons] of disobedience*” (Ephesians 2:1–2).

Now the sons of disobedience, those are the people of this world. And the Bible tells us that just as the Holy Spirit works in the hearts and lives of those who are saved, the spirit of Satan works in the hearts and lives of those who are unsaved. And therefore the unsaved will never understand the saved. Go back to 1 John the third chapter and verse 1, and you’re going to understand why we’re so easily misunderstood. First John chapter 3, verse 1: “*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not*” (1 John 3:1).

This world’s not going to understand you. Friend, when you try to explain spiritual things to an unsaved man, he’ll think you’re crazy. And he’ll look at you, and he’ll say, “I don’t see that.” And he’s not lying. He doesn’t see it. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:4, “*The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.*” He can’t see it. You might as well be trying to explain a sunset to a blind man. They think we’re crazy.

This is what John says. He says, “*Therefore the world knoweth us not.*” That word *knoweth* means it doesn’t understand us. It doesn’t perceive what we’re doing, because it knew Him not. And Jesus said, in John 15, verse 19, “*If ye were of the world, the world would love [its] own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you*” (John 15:19).

Christians are not supposed to be in some sort of a popularity contest. And we’re not supposed to get all upset with the heebie jeebies if suddenly we discover there’s somebody that doesn’t like us. Jesus said, “Beware when all men speak well of you” (Luke 6:26). This world that hated the master is also going to hate the master’s servant. And so dear friend, we are in the world, but we are not of the world. We start at a different source. We follow a different course. We’re going to end at a different

conclusion.

Remember this: that the people of the world are unsaved people. And *a* Christian *is* *a* twice-born *man in a* world *of* once-born *men and he's going to find himself going* against *the* tide *most of the time*. We're members of the human world, we live in the world, but we are not a part of Satan's system of doing things.

To me, it's like a deep sea diver who's beneath the sea and that cord that goes up—his life supply is from above. And while he's beneath the water, he's out of his element. He's down there, he's getting along, but that's not his element. And he knows that his life is above and he stays in link with that life.

That's the way we are, dear friend. We are in the world, but we are not of the world. Now it's one thing for the diver to be in the world, but it's quite another thing for the water to be in that suit. Now friend, it's one thing for us to be in the world, but it's quite another thing for the world to get into us. We are to stay in link with Jesus who is our life. And the Bible says we're not to set our affections on things beneath, but on things above, *"where Christ sitteth at the right hand of the Father"* (Colossians 3:1–2).

## II. The Corruption of the World—What It Does

And so one reason we are not to love this world is because of the character of the world, what the world is. It is a system. It is a system of things that opposes all that is good and godly and righteous. Now the second reason we're not to love the world, not only because of the character of the world, what the world is, but because of the corruption of the world, what the world does. Go back to our text now, and look in verse 15 again: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."*

Now what does the world do? The world is here to draw away our affections from God the Father, to keep us from loving God the Father. No greater duty, no greater joy, than to love God. *"This is the first and great commandment"*: to love God. It is the greatest thing that you can do. The greatest sin is not rape, or adultery. The greatest sin is to fail to love God. *"This is the first and greatest commandment."* *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength"* (Mark 12:30).

Love God: that's number one. But this world is here to keep our love for the Lord from being all that it ought to be. That's the reason James said in James chapter 4, verse 4, *"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God"* (James 4:4).

And so this world is here like a flirtatious harlot to steal away our love from our Lord and Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. It is here to corrupt us. And we're not to love the

world, number one: because of what it is, the character of the world; number two: because of what it does, the corruption of the world. Look at it in verse 16, “*All that is in the world,*”—number one—“*the lust of the flesh,*”—number two—“*...the lust of the eyes, and*”—number three—“*the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*”

And now you see the world’s three methods for stealing away your love from your Lord and your God and your Savior.

### A. The Lust of the Flesh

The first of these is the lust of the flesh, and that deals with doing. The second of these is the lust of the eyes, and that deals with having. And the third of these is the pride of life, and that deals with being. All temptation is made up in one of these three areas—doing, having, or being—as we’re going to see in just a moment.

Now what does the Bible mean when it says the lust of the flesh? The lust of the flesh is that which appeals to man’s fallen nature. You see, the flesh is what you are in Adam. Now when the Bible says *flesh*, the Bible doesn’t mean “skin and bones,” the Bible doesn’t mean “hide and hair.” That’s not what the Bible means when it says *flesh*. He’s talking about the old nature, that nature that you receive from Adam.

See, the Spirit is the nature that you receive from the new birth; the flesh is the nature that you receive from the old birth. And the Bible says in Galatians chapter 5, verse 17, “*The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these [two] are contrary the one to the other*” (Galatians 5:17). And everybody who has been saved has felt this battle going on, this civil war within the forces of man’s soul. You’ve felt it, and so have I—everybody who has been saved. You know that you love God and there is that Holy Spirit within you bearing witness with your spirit that you’re a child of God. And you want to sing and praise and serve God, and yet you feel that old fleshly nature, as we sing it, “Prone to wander, Lord I feel it; prone to leave the God I love” (Robert Robinson). And there is that battle that’s going on: “the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.”

Someone said, “It’s like I have two dogs within me, a bad dog and a good dog, and they are always fighting.” Someone else said, “Who wins?” He said, “The one I say, ‘Sic ‘em to.’”

And so it is with you, dear friend, that God gives you the choice that you can live according to the spirit or you can live according to the flesh. But the flesh is that principle that would draw away your love from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the flesh is not the body, but the flesh many times operates through the bodily impulse. When God made you and God created you, God gave you certain impulses, good impulses, like the impulse of hunger and thirst and the need for rest and the need for achievement and the need for pleasure and sex. And all of these are God-given



instincts. And there is nothing dirty or impure about any of those, but when the flesh takes these things over, the flesh takes these things and distorts them and perverts them and twists them and misuses them.

So hunger turns to gluttony, sex turns to immorality, the need for recreation turns to botchery, and the need for rest turns to laziness. Because then the flesh, that old nature, comes and takes the things of God and perverts those things and twists and distorts those things and tries to get us to fulfill a legitimate desire in an illegitimate way. And that is the lust of the flesh, and it deals with doing—just simply doing the wrong thing. I would say it's what the young people call "doing what comes naturally."

### **B. The Lust of the Eyes**

Now there's the lust of the eyes. And here's the second tool Satan has in this world's system to draw our love away from the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the lust of the eyes doesn't deal primarily with doing; it deals with having. You see, the eyes have an appetite too. Have you ever thought about it? We know that the body has an appetite, but your eyes have an appetite. Have you ever heard anybody say, "Feast your eyes on that"? You see, there are some things we love to feast our eyes on. Now God made beautiful things, and God gave us eyes to behold beautiful things. And Jesus said, *"Consider the lilies of the field...they toil not, neither do they spin...[but] even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these"* (Matthew 6:28–29). And yet there is a way in which the lust of the eyes and the desire to behold things and to have things and to look upon things and to fondle things can be perverted and distorted until we get very worldly.

Now this is a more of a sophisticated sin; it is more of an intellectual sin; it is more of a cultured sin. Some of you ladies who would never get caught in a discotheque could be very worldly. You're worldliness may not be the nightclub; it may be the garden club. Now let me say I'm not saying the garden club is wrong. No, no. I'm not saying it's wrong to grow flowers or to have a social, but I'm saying that when you accept a certain value system, and that value system is pressed upon you, and you're so concerned about the lust of your eyes and the things that you see and the things that you have, then, dear friend, you have been caught up in what we call the system of this world. And that deals with having.

### **C. The Pride of Life**

And then the third temptation is the temptation of being. And this is what the Bible calls "the pride of life." And this Greek word is the word that we get the word *braggart* from. This is the person who wants to be number one. It deals with being. We want to be somebody.

That's the reason that people are constantly gossiping. Do you know why people

gossip? Well, they are trying to pull someone else down to their level. What they are really trying to do is not pull other people down, but push themselves up.

Do you know why it's dangerous to try to save a man who's drowning? He'll drown you. Do you know why he'll drown you? No, he's not mad at you. He's trying to push you down to push him up. That's right. That's why he will drown you. He's trying. He thinks, if he can push you down, he'll rise up. And there are a lot of people who are drowning in a sea of insecurity, and that's why they gossip: trying to pull other people down in order to...

Why do people buy things they can't afford? Have you ever thought about that? Why do they owe their soul to the country store? It is not primarily the sin of doing. It's not because they want to do something with those things. It's not even primarily the sin of having. It's not the lust of the eyes that they particularly want those things. It's the sin of being—they want to be important. They think that things will make them important sometimes. It's keeping up with the Joneses. You know, we buy so many things we don't need. We buy things we don't need and buy things we don't want with money we don't have to impress people we don't like. And then we're just keeping up with the Joneses, and about the time we catch up with the Joneses, then the Joneses refinance. And then we start all over again. And that's the pride of life: wanting to be up with my neighbor, wanting this, wanting that.

Now you see, this is a system, a system of this world. And how vain it is and how foolish it is! And it's passing away. But this is what the devil is using to draw away our love from the Lord Jesus Christ. *"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh,"*—that's doing—*"and the lust of the eyes,"*—that's having—*"and the pride of life,"*—that's being—*"is not of the Father, but is of the world."*

#### **D. Jesus Met These Same Three Temptations**

Now the Lord Jesus Christ met these same three temptations. Remember when the Lord Jesus Christ was tempted there in the wilderness? He met the same three temptations (Matthew 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13).

For example, what was the temptation of the lust of his flesh? That was to turn the stones into bread, to satisfy his viscera, his craving for food. That was in the realm of doing. But Jesus overcame that temptation.

And then what was the next temptation? It was the lust of the eyes. Satan took Him up to an exceeding high mountain and showed Him all of the kingdoms of the world and said, "I'll give you all of this if you'll worship me." And he showed it all to Him—the lust of the eyes. That's the sin of having. But Jesus whipped Satan again.

And then the third thing was the temptation to the pride of life. He took Him to an

exceeding high pinnacle of the temple and said, “Cast yourself down and God will give his angels charge over thee to bear thee up, lest thou cast thy foot upon a stone.” Well, the Bible had already said, “*The LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple*” (Malachi 3:1). Can you think what a publicity stunt that would have been if Jesus had just come wafting down into the middle of the temple, just floating Himself down there on angel wings? Why, that isn’t the way He came. Oh, He was the humble Galilean, but the devil said, “Be somebody; be somebody.” That’s the pride of life. “Pull one of the grandest publicity stunts that’s ever been known.” But Jesus refused to do it.

And I’ll tell you why Jesus refused to do it. Jesus said, “*The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me*” (John 14:30). Do you know what that means? Satan couldn’t find any foul nest in the Lord Jesus in which he could hatch these eggs of rebellion. You see, Jesus was sinless. He wasn’t like we are.

I read a book one time called *The Big Con*. I think I read it when I was 13 years old, but I’ve never forgotten it. And it deals with con men, confidence men, who deceive and connive and cheat other people. But one thing I’ve never forgotten in this book, the men who were confidence men said this: “No man can be caught in a confidence game unless he first of all has a touch of larceny in his own blood.”

Now you think about that. He’s got to have just a little touch of larceny in his own blood before he can ever be caught in a confidence game. And so when they are looking for someone that they call a *mark*—that is, somebody they are going to get—they are looking for someone who though outwardly he may be honest and he may be a forthright businessman, down underneath there is that little touch of larceny.

Well let me tell you something, friend. Satan couldn’t find any touch of larceny in the Lord Jesus. Amen? Oh, “the prince of this world cometh; he findeth nothing in me.” You see, Jesus overcame the temptation of doing. He overcame the temptation of having. He overcame the temptation of being.

Now get me right here. It’s not wrong to do. It’s not wrong to have. It’s not wrong to be. But just do the right thing, have the right thing, and be the right thing, you see. Now everybody wants to do something. Everybody wants to have something. Everybody wants to be something. Why not the best? Why not the best?

You want to do something? Serve God. There’s no greater thrill. You want to have something? Well, when you serve Him, all things are yours. “*The meek shall inherit the earth*” (Psalm 37:11). You want to be something? What could be better than being a child of the king, a royal blueblood? Oh, you see, why take second best? In the Lord Jesus Christ, we have the fulfillment of these basic desires. It’s God that gave you the desire to do something. It’s God that gave you the desire to have something. It’s God that gave you a desire to be something. But don’t take second best. This world is not the real world; it’s passing away. And it is a world that will steal away your love from the

Lord Jesus Christ, and it is a world that will keep you from the fulfillment that God wants you to have.

### **III. The Condemnation of the World—Where It Is Headed**

And so why does the Bible say, “Love not the world?” Number one: because of the character of the world, what it is. Number two: because of the corruption of the world, what it does. And then number three: because of the condemnation of the world, where it is headed. Notice again verses 15 through 17: *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”* Now watch verse 17: *“And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”*

Friend, I want to tell you about this system that Satan rules. It’s doomed. Satan rules a doomed domain. Satan sails a sinking ship. Why follow a loser? Listen. This world is passing away. Give it enough time and even the mossy fingers of time will pull down this world’s monuments. The foul breath of decay will destroy this world’s achievements. And it’s all passing. It’s going. You cannot keep it.

That’s the reason the Bible says, *“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”* (Mark 8:36–37). Friend, if you could gain the whole world, it wouldn’t satisfy. You can’t gain the whole world, anyway. But if you could, it wouldn’t satisfy you.

Somebody asked J. D. Rockefeller, “Mr. Rockefeller, you’re a wealthy man. How much money is enough money?” Do you know what he said? “Just a little more.”

Friend, if you gained the whole world, it wouldn’t satisfy you; you’d want the moon fenced in for a potato patch. And I want to tell you something else. Even if it would satisfy you, you couldn’t keep it. This world is passing away; it’s going. How foolish we are to follow something that cannot last.

Now the pleasures—are you living for time, or are you living for eternity? Which are you living for? “Well,” you say, “I don’t know. How can I tell?” Well, if you are living for the pleasures of the flesh, you are living for time. If you are living for the joys of the Spirit, you are living for eternity. If you are living for what is seen, you are living for time. If you are living for what is unseen and therefore real, you are living for eternity. If you are living for the praise of man, you are living for time. If you are living for the glory of God, you are living for eternity.

To live for this world is foolish. It’s like painting the deck of a sinking ship. Dear friend, I want to tell you, Satan rules a doomed system. And long after this world’s system with its vaunted culture and with its proud philosophy and with its materialistic intellectualism and its godless ways have been forgotten, long after this planet has

been replaced by new heavens and a new earth, those who do the will of God will be sharing in the glory of God for all eternity.

That's what the Bible is saying here: "This world passeth away, and the lust therefore, but he that does the will of the Father abides forever."

#### **IV. How to Know the Will of God**

And so, what is the meaning of the message today? The meaning of the message of this, friend: The wisest thing, the smartest thing, the best thing you could do, is to find the will of God and do it. Or, let the will of God find you, is a better way to put it.

Now I want to give you a scripture that deals with how to know the will of God. It's not found in I John, but it relates to it so clearly that we're going to it. I want you to turn to Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2—Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. All right now, this is so important, don't miss it—don't miss it. For this is the crux of the whole matter. For the Bible says, *"He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."*

To do the will of God you must know the will of God. And I want to give you a formula for knowing the will of God, and it's found in Romans 12, verses 1 and 2: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world..."*—notice again he's still talking about the world—*"be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"* (Romans 12:1–2).

Now notice: *"He that doeth the will of God abideth forever."* So you better prove what is God's will. Now here's God's way to prove His will. You want to know what it is?

##### **A. Presentation**

First of all, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice."* Write down the word *presentation*: *"that ye present your bodies."* What does that mean? When the Bible says, "your bodies," it means all of you. You give God everything. You say, "Lord, here I am. My mind, my emotions, my will, my body, my soul, my spirit, my money; every ounce, every inch, every nerve, every fiber—Lord God, I give it to you. I present it a living sacrifice. I take hands off of this world with both hands. And I lay hands upon Jesus Christ with both hands. Here I am, Lord. I give myself away to you."

Have you ever done that? Have you ever presented a living sacrifice? People talk about dying for Jesus. Most people are not even willing to live for Jesus. A living sacrifice! A living sacrifice! "Here I am, Lord."

## B. Transformation

All right, step number one to knowing the will of God is presentation. And if you're not willing to make that presentation, then go no further. The second word I want you to write down is the word *transformation*. For the Bible says, "*And be not conformed to this world.*" Remember what this world is? The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

Don't be conformed to this world. That word *conformed* means "squeezed into a mold." Don't be squeezed into a mold by this world. "*But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.*" Now what does that word *transformed* mean? It comes from the Greek word that we get our word *metamorphosis* from. It means a change where the inner nature of something comes to the surface.

For example, an ugly, repulsive caterpillar crawls up a limb out on a leaf somewhere and spins a cocoon, and out of that cocoon comes a beautiful Monarch butterfly. Now really, that butterfly that comes out of that cocoon is that worm that's gone through a metamorphosis, a transformation. What is the inner nature of a caterpillar? It's a butterfly. And so a metamorphosis is when the inner nature comes to the surface. What is the inner nature of a Christian? Jesus Christ. Christ is our life.

But you see, dear friends, unless we present ourselves to Him, that transformation will never take place, and the Jesus that is in us will never shine forth, and we'll not be transformed. There are many people who are saved, but rather than being transformed they are conformed. And they've been saved, but their inner nature never comes to the surface.

Most Christians need a metamorphosis. They need to present themselves to the Lord in such a way that their inner nature, the Jesus Christ in them, will shine out of them, and they will be transformed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## C. Revelation

Now watch it: Presentation plus transformation equals *revelation*. Notice that you may be transformed. And then the Bible says, "*that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*" You want to know the will of God? Present yourself to God, let Him change you, and then you won't have to find the will of God; the will of God will find you. The will of God will find you. People say, "Oh, I'm searching to know the will of God—searching to know the will of God." *It's not your job to find the will of God. It's God's job to reveal His will to you. It is your job to present yourself to Him.*

Suppose I say to my son, "Now son, there is something I want you to do. And son, if you do it, I'll reward you handsomely. And son, if you don't do it, I'm going to punish you severely." "Well," he says, "since you explained it to me that way, what is it?" I say, "Well, I'm not going to tell you." "What?" "No, that's for you to find out what it is." Now



what kind of a father would that be—saying, “Now here’s something I want you to do; and if you do it, you get a reward; if you don’t do it, you get punished; and I’m not going to tell you what it is”?

God is not that kind of a father. You see, dear friend, when you present yourself to God, God will show you His will for your life. And here’s the formula for knowing the will of God. Listen. Presentation plus transformation equals revelation. Don’t be conformed to this world. Anybody who has been conformed to this world will not know the will of God; therefore, he will not do the will of God. And remember: *“He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”* One of these days when the sun and the moon and the stars have grown cold, they that do the will of God will shine like the stars in the brightness of the firmament forever and forever (Daniel 12:3).

## Conclusion

Oh, friend, don’t you want to do the will of God? Don’t you want the joy that only Jesus Christ can give? All right, let me say this and I must conclude—I must conclude. *We who are Christians are in the world, but not of the world, to bear witness to the world, and that’s the only business in the world that we have.*

We are not here to condemn the world. We are not to condone the world. We’re here to confront the world with Jesus Christ. That’s our job: to be rescuing men out world, to be telling them about the Lord Jesus. And if you’re now in this present world, Jesus Christ, by His death, can set you free. For the Bible says, in Galatians 1, verse 4, it is Jesus *“who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this...world, according to the will of God and our Father”* (Galatians 1:4).

He will deliver you by His death—He gave Himself for you—out of this world’s system that’s against our Lord and His Christ. Would you like to be saved? Would you like to know that you’re a child of God? Would you like to have a purpose that is for all eternity? Are you tired of following a loser? Would you like to stop merely drawing your breath and drawing your salary, and say, “I’m linked with eternity; I want to know God; I want to abide forever; I want *‘joy unspeakable and full of glory’* (1 Peter 1:8); and I’m tired of the devil’s substitute; I want to be right with God”?

Oh, my dear friend, listen to me now, and listen carefully. God sent me here today to tell you that He loves you. And God brought you here to hear it. And I tell you with all of the love in my soul that Jesus died for you on the cross. And the Bible says if you would believe on Him and receive Him into your heart that God will forgive your sins. God will come into your heart and give you a new nature, and one day He’ll take you home to be with Him forever.

What is the will of God for you if you’re a lost person? *“The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). And this message



is God calling you today. This message is God saying, “I love you and I want to save you. And I sent my Son to die for you on the cross.” You’re not saved by joining a church or getting baptized or keeping the Ten Commandments. You’re saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”* (Acts 1

# Your Friendly Enemy

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: November 1, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 2:15–17**

## Outline

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## Introduction

**B**e finding 1 John, the second chapter, and when you've found it, look up here. And, let me tell you something that you may not know. When you're a Christian, the Lord fills your heart with love, but you are not to love everything. As a matter of fact, there are some things that you cannot be a child of God and truly love. As a matter of fact, you cannot truly love without hating some things. Now, today, "hate" is an ugly word, and there is some hate that is ugly hate. But, let me give you a scripture. Even before we read in 1 John, put down "Psalm 97, verse 10": *"Ye that love the LORD, hate evil"* (Psalm 97:10). And then, again, Romans chapter 12 and verse 9: the Bible says, *"Let love be without dissimulation"* (Romans 12:9). Do you know what the word "dissimulation" means? That's a big word. It just means "don't have hypocritical love." *"Let love be [not hypocritical]. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good"* (Romans 12:9). Now, you cannot cleave to that which is good without abhorring that which is evil. You cannot love the Lord without hating evil. I mean, you know this in the natural world. If you love health, then you're going to hate disease. If you love peace, you're going to hate war. If you love cleanliness, you're going to hate filth. If you love people, you're going to hate sin. If you love life, you're going to hate death and killing.

And, our Lord here tells us there's something we're not to love. Look, if you will, in

verse 15: *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever”* (1 John 2:15–17). Now, the Bible tells us here in 1 John that we’re not to love the world. The title of our message today is “Your Friendly Enemy”—“Your Friendly Enemy.” You have an enemy, and that enemy is the world; and the Bible says you’re not to love the world.

Now, what do we mean by that? Obviously, it’s not talking about the Planet Earth. Now, the Bible also calls that “the world,” but there’s nothing wrong with loving this planet, what God has made. When God made creation, God said, “That is good.” And, you can love the rocks, the hills, the trees, the fleas, the bees, all of the rest of it—you can love it; you can love the flowers. Jesus said, *“Consider the lilies how they grow...Solomon in all [of] his [opulence] was not [dressed up] like one of these”* (Luke 12:27). Nothing wrong with loving God’s creation. And, thank God, this is my Father’s world, amen? He made it. And, you can love it, and you ought to enjoy it. And, when he says, *“Love not the world”* (1 John 2:15), he’s not talking about the world of people. We’re to love people—red, yellow, black, and white. There’s to be no prejudice; there’s to be no hatred of any person. Whether they’re saved or lost, we’re to love all people. Why? Because the Bible says in John chapter 3, verse 16: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son”* (John 3:16). So, if God loves the people of this world, we’re to love the people of this world.

What is he talking about, therefore, in 1 John, the second chapter, when he says, *“Love not the world”* (1 John 2:15)? Well, it’s tied up in that word “world,” which is the Greek word *cosmos*, and you know what the *cosmos* is. That is the order of things. The very word *cosmos* means “a system or an order of things.” It is a way of doing things. For example, today, we do the same thing. We talk about the world of finance, or the world of sports, or the world of fashion. That is, there’s a certain system—the sports system or the finance system. We call that a “world.” That’s the way the word “world” is being used here; it’s the word *cosmos*. What is a cosmopolitan area? It’s a system made up of two words; one means “city” or “populous,” and people come together to work in an orderly way. We call that a “cosmopolitan area.” When a woman puts her makeup on, what’s she putting on? “Cosmetics”—she’s putting her face in order. Somebody said, “Do you think it’s a sin if women wear makeup?” I think it’s a sin if some women don’t. She’s putting her face in order; and so, those are cosmetics. “Cosmic”—all of these words come from this word, where the Bible says, *“Love not the world”* (1 John 2:15). There is a system that we are not to love. That’s what he’s talking

about. He's not talking about Planet Earth; he's not talking about the people, but he is talking about an ungodly, devilish system that is set against our Lord and His Christ. And, you're not to love that world. Although that world may be very friendly to you—it may cozy up to you—it is a friendly enemy.

And so, we're going to look at the world and see what the Bible has to say about the world, and we're going to understand why we're not to love that world. We're going to think about the world and its character. We're going to think about the world and its corruption—what it does. And, we're going to think about the world and where it is headed—what the conclusion of this whole thing is, and the consequences of following and loving the world.

## **I. The World and Its Character**

What is the character of the world? When the Bible says here in 1 John 2, verse 15: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world"* (1 John 2:15), what is the character of this world? Let me give you some words that begin with the letter "P" so you can remember them.

### **A. It Has a Prince**

First of all, this world has a prince—it has a prince, a dark, devilish, diabolical person, the devil, who is the prince of this world. Now, put these scriptures down, if you will, as we think about this. For example, Jesus, speaking in John chapter 12, verse 31, says, *"Now shall the prince of this world be cast out"* (John 12:31). He was talking about the cross that would break Satan's back. *"Now [will] the prince of this world"*—this system—*"be cast out"* (John 12:31).

And then, in John chapter 14 and verse 30, Jesus, speaking of the devil, said, *"The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me"* (John 14:30). That is, "I don't have any itch the devil can scratch." *"The prince of this world"*—the devil—*"cometh, [but he] hath nothing in me"* (John 14:30).

And then, Jesus, speaking of the prince's final judgment, in John chapter 16 and verse 11, he says that *"the prince of this world is judged"* (John 16:11). That means that Satan sails a sinking ship and rules a doomed domain—this dark prince—and the Apostle John, in this same passage of scripture that we're in, in 1 John—if you go on over back toward the back; you needn't turn to it right now—but he says, in 1 John chapter 5, verse 19: *"And we know that...the...world"*—*cosmos*, the whole world—*"lieth in wickedness"* (1 John 5:19). Williams translates that "in the lap of the wicked one." That is, this whole world is just being rocked, cradled, in the hands of Satan—this dark prince. There is a mastermind behind this world system.

Sometimes people ask, “Do you believe in the conspiratorial theory of history? They have some dark Machiavellian scheme; there’s a conspiracy here and a conspiracy there.” And, I’m sure there are some of those conspiracies, but there is a bigger conspiracy than people dare dream. That is, there is a mastermind; there is a prince. His name is Satan. He has a whole system of people that work beneath him, for the Bible says, *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities”* (Ephesians 6:12). You see, the principality is the polity over whence the prince rules—over principalities and powers. He is a mastermind. He has a myriad of underlings who do his bidding. There is an intricate organization—if you please, a World Wide Web of wickedness. Now, there is a prince; this world has a prince.

### **B. It Has a Philosophy**

Not only does this world have a prince; it has—the second “P”—it has a philosophy—a philosophy. There is a networking of ideas and values that are skillfully woven together to entrap the most innocent. For example, 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 19: the Bible says, *“For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God”—“the wisdom of this world”* (1 Corinthians 3:19). This world is wise, but it is wise to do evil. So, there is a philosophy, and it extends from the schoolhouse to the statehouse, from Madison Avenue to Wall Street. It appears in recreational theme parks like Disney and other places. It may seem innocent; it may seem beautiful. It is often alluring.

### **C. It Has a Purpose**

But, the world has a prince; the world has a philosophy. And, may I tell you that your friendly enemy, the world, has a purpose? That’s the next “P.” What is the purpose? Well, there is a calculated plan, an unwavering purpose. And, what is that purpose? It is to draw you away from God, very alluringly. Now, therefore, the world is against the Lord Jesus Christ.

Put this scripture down—John chapter 7 and verse 7—Jesus, speaking to His disciples, said, *“The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth”* (John 7:7). Have you ever wondered why the world hates Jesus? The world doesn’t hate Jesus because He healed the sick; the world doesn’t hate Jesus because He blessed the children. The world doesn’t hate Jesus because He turned water into wine or broke bread and fed the multitudes. The world doesn’t hate Jesus because He walked on the water; the world doesn’t hate Jesus because He died on the cross. But, Jesus said, *“The world...hateth [me], because I testify of it, that [its] works...are evil”* (John 7:7). That’s why the world hates Jesus. I mean, today, you’re not supposed to say anything is evil. Friend, today, we are supposed to be tolerant of everything. Isn’t that right? Just tolerant—tolerant. Do you know what the sin today is? The sin today is to call sin “sin.” You call sin “sin”—hey,

friend, you're spitting against the wind in today's society. And, Jesus said, *"The world...hateth [me], because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil"* (John 7:7).

And then, Jesus said in John chapter 14, verse 17, speaking—we're talking now about the purpose of this world—and Jesus said in John 14, verse 17, speaking of the Holy Spirit, and He calls Him, *"Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you"*—"dwelleth with you"—that was Jesus Christ Himself—"shall be in you" (John 14:17)—that is the Holy Spirit coming to represent the Lord Jesus.

John 15, verse 18: *"If the world hate you"*—and by the way, it will. Don't get the idea, if you get right with God, they're going to make you the mayor of your city. I thank God for godly mayors, but friend, don't get the idea that this world is going to praise and pat and flatter you if you get right with God. It'll break your neck, if it can—"If the world hate you"—Jesus said—"know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18).

And then, old James says in James chapter 4 and verse 4: *"[You] adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that friendship [with] the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore [shall] be the friend of the world is the enemy of God"* (James 4:4). If you are a friend to this world that hates Jesus, you are an enemy of God and a traitor to Jesus Christ, who died on the cross and was crucified by this world.

This world has a prince; this world has a philosophy. This world has a purpose, and that purpose is to draw away your heart, to seduce you, from loving the Lord Jesus Christ as you ought. Jesus said in John chapter 15, verse 19: *"If [you] were of the world, the world would love his own: but because [you] are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you"* (John 15:19). Sometimes we use the word "worldly Christian." Billy Sunday said, "You might as well speak of a heavenly devil. It's a contradiction in terms." We hear a lot about the separation of Church and State. I believe we need to hear a little bit more about the separation of Church and world, don't you? I mean, today you can't tell the difference between those who name the name of Jesus and those who don't. They look alike; they talk alike. They go the same places; they smoke the same things. No, we're to come out from the world.

#### **D. It Has a People**

So, here is a world. It has, friend, a prince; it has a philosophy. It has a purpose, and it has a people. Luke chapter 16 and verse 8—Jesus said, *"For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light"*—"the children of this world" (Luke 16:8). The world has its people. Now, you might as well understand it. Folks, when you got saved, you came out of the world. And, you are different; you are twice-born in a world of once-born people. And so, you are going to find yourself swimming against the

tide all the way. Don't get the idea that over here is the broad way, and over here is the narrow way, and the broad way is going this way, and you're over here on a little side road, going this way, in the same direction. No, no—if the broad way is coming this way, this is the way you're coming—just like that. You're swimming against the tide all the time. And, what you have, what you know, what you believe—it starts at a different source; it follows a different course, and friend, it's headed toward a different conclusion. I want to tell you something, now: if you were of the world, the world would love you. You are twice-born. This world is not your home. You are a pilgrim; you are just passing through. We are not a part of this world system.

Now folks, that's a forgotten message in today's Church—do you know that? But, it's not a forgotten message in the Word of God. The Bible says, *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world”* (1 John 2:15). Do you know what the devil's purpose is? Romans chapter 12 and verse 2—it is to conform you (Romans 12:2). That's the reason the Apostle Paul said, *“Be not conformed to this world: but be...transformed”* (Romans 12:2). The world wants to take you and squeeze you into its mold. The world doesn't want you to be different. The world wants you to follow its prince. The world wants you to believe its philosophies. The world wants you to join its purpose, and the world wants you to be a part of its people—to be conformed to this world.

## **II. The World and Its Corruption**

So, why does John say, *“Love not the world”* (1 John 2:15)? Well, number one, because of the character of the world; number two, because of the corruption of the world. Look at this passage of scripture right here now—look in verse 16: *“For all that is in the world”—are you ready for this?—“the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world”* (1 John 2:16). So, we see not only the character of the world—what it is—but the corruption of the world—what it does.

Now, this world that would seduce you from loving the Lord Jesus has three main appeals. They're right here in this verse—verse 16. They are the lust of the flesh—do you see it?—the lust of the eyes—do you see it?—and the pride of life. I want us to look at those; I want to look at them very carefully.

### **A. The Lust of the Flesh**

What is the lust of the flesh? What does that mean? Well, that is Satan's appeal to your old nature. When the Bible says “the flesh” here, it doesn't mean your hide, your hair, your skin, your nerves, your sinews, your bones. It doesn't mean that. But, when the Bible says “the flesh,” that means your old Adam—Adamic nature. The flesh is what we



have received from our first birth; spirit is what we received from our second birth. And so, Galatians chapter 5, verse 17 says, *“For the flesh [lust] against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh”* (Galatians 5:17). That is, when you get saved, civil war begins on the inside. Have you felt it? Of course you have. There’s that new nature that wants to serve God; there’s that old nature that doesn’t want to lie down and be dead. And so, you’re going to have a battle on the inside.

Now, the Bible calls this “this old nature,” “the desires of the old nature,” “the lust of the flesh.” Now, these are desires, primarily, in the area of the material, the physical—normally, in the area of gluttony, laziness, drunkenness, immorality, perversion. You see, God has given you certain normal hungers. Thank God if you have a good appetite. Ambition is normal and good. The sex drive is a gift from God, because it is part of the glue that holds the family together. But, what Satan wants to do is to take normal, God-given proclivities and appetites and corrupt them and pervert them, and he wants us to pamper our flesh with food, and sleep, and sex, and drugs, and liquor, and laziness. What sin is, is primarily an abuse of something that is good. The devil doesn’t have any raw materials. God made everything, so anything bad is a perversion of something that is good, and it is a misuse of good things.

For example, you can misuse food. You can misuse sleep. You can misuse sex. Good things are bad things—listen to me—good things are bad things when they are out of place. Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33 says, *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33). God’s not going to take second place, but the world says, “Pamper your flesh; satisfy your flesh.” And so, there is the lust of the flesh—now, listen carefully—that deals with our passions, our passions, our passions. That’s the lust of the flesh.

## **B. The Lust of the Eyes**

Now, the next thing he speaks of is the lust of the eyes. That doesn’t deal with our passions; it deals with our possessions. You see, your eyes have an appetite, also. Have you ever heard anybody say, “Just feast your eyes upon that”? Now, if the lust of the flesh deals with doing, the lust of the eyes deals with having. And, this temptation may be a lot more refined than the lust of the flesh. The lust of the eyes may be sophisticated, intellectual, beautiful, and it’s the desire not merely to have and to own things—that is a legitimate desire—but to want more than we need and to be dissatisfied. As the Bible tells us in 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 10: *“For the love of money is the root of all evil”* (1 Timothy 6:10). Now, it doesn’t say, “Money is the root of all evil.”

Let me ask you a question—and be honest, but don’t answer out loud: What really

motivates you? I mean, what are your personal goals? Is the first thing in your life to be a godly person, to seek the Kingdom of God, or are you trying to be a successful person? Are you more consumed with material things than spiritual things? Have you tried to put God in second place, when the Bible says, “*Seek ye first the kingdom of God*” (Matthew 6:33)? Your eyes are looking around, and you see things and say, “I want that. I want that, and I need this; and I want that.” That’s the lust of the eyes. What are you more concerned about—what school your child graduates from, and his degree, and his success; or, his holy, godly character? I mean, really, what is more important to you?

Well, let me ask you another question: Is there any, any, any material possession you would not depart with for the glory of God? Now, just answer that question in your heart. Are you more interested in the lives of the rich and the famous than you are the righteous and the faithful? Had you rather be invited to lunch by Bill Gates or some soul winner? I mean, what really melts your butter? What really motivates you?

### **C. The Pride of Life**

There is the lust of the flesh—that’s our passions; it deals with doing. There’s the lust of the eyes—that’s our possessions; it deals with having. And then, there’s the pride of life—that deals with being—being. That doesn’t deal with passion or possession; it deals with position. “Oh,” this world says, “be somebody; I mean, be recognized. Get a name for yourself.” And, the whole world is just wrapped around these things. That’s the reason so many of our young couples—listen to me, young couples—you are in difficulty today, because of the pride of life. You are trying to keep up with the Joneses. You buy things you don’t need with money you don’t have to impress people you don’t like. About the time you catch up with the Joneses, they refinance and off you go again. That’s the pride of life—that’s the pride of life. You think that you have to be noticed. That’s the reason that people dress sometimes outlandishly. That’s the reason you buy an automobile when you don’t need it. That’s the reason people gossip. They think that somehow, if they pull others down—like a drowning man drowning in a sea of insecurity—if they pull others down, that somehow they elevate themselves. That’s the reason people take drugs and drink. They’re ten-feet-tall; they’re the life of the party. They’re somebody (at least for a little while).

There’s a system—there is a system. It deals with passions, possession, and position. It deals with doing, and having, and being. Folks, Madison Avenue knows this. They will write to you a letter, and they will say, “Mr. Rogers, our research shows us that you are a man of discriminate taste, that you are a man of above average intelligence, that you like the finer things of life. And, you’ve worked hard and deserve these things.

Now, let us tell you something. I hope you'll be interested, Mr. Rogers..." Well, of course I am, since they've described me perfectly. Listen, folks—they know exactly how to get inside your head. That's the way Madison Avenue makes millions and millions and millions of dollars.

Passions, possession, position; doing, having, being—that's the world's system; that's what's in the world. Now folks, that's not new. That was in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve fell for that—Satan's appeal there in the Garden of Eden. What did he do? He says, "There's the food that's good for the taste." All right, what's that? That's their passions. "It's pleasant for the eyes." What's that? Their possession. "It's desired to make one wise." What is that? That is position. Do you see how old it is? There's nothing new. The Bible says that Jesus *"was [tempted] in all points...like as we are"* (Hebrews 4:15). How? "Well," you say, "was He tempted to take drugs, to ride a motorcycle 110 miles an hour?" No. Well, those three things—right away, the Lord said, "Turn these stones into bread." What's that? Satisfy the flesh—that's your possessions, your passions. That's doing. Then, what's the next thing he said? He said to him, "He taketh him up to show him all the kingdoms of the world" (Matthew 4:8). What's that? That is not doing; that's having. That's not his passions; it's his possessions. He said, "All these kingdoms I'll give you" (Matthew 4:9). And then, what was the next temptation? He said, "Cast yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and he'll give his angels charge over thee to bear thee up, lest you cast your foot upon a stone" (Matthew 4:6). That is, "Make a dramatic entrance." What is that? That is position. "Be somebody important. Do some magical thing. Make a grand, dramatic entrance." Let me tell you, folks, the devil is working on you in the same three areas: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. It is of the world.

"Well," you say, "now wait a minute, Adrian. Are you trying to tell me I'm just going to sit in the corner and suck my thumb?" No! What I'm telling you is this—that every temptation is a perversion of something that is good. The devil is a pervert—a pervert. God wants you to be in the business of doing, and He wants you to be in the business of having; and He wants you to be in the business of being the right way. You want something to do? Serve God. You want something to have? Give your heart to Jesus Christ. And, the Bible says, *"All things are your's"* (1 Corinthians 3:21). *"The meek shall inherit the earth"* (Psalm 37:11). You want to be somebody? Friend, let me tell you something: you give your heart to Jesus—you're a child of the King. You're next of kin to the Holy Trinity. Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call you His brother. You are a royal blueblood, a prince and a king. Why take second best? Doing, and having, and being are found in the Lord Jesus Christ. The devil's a liar and a pervert—that's what he is. The world has a system that will try to draw you away from the Lord Jesus Christ.

### III. The World and Its Condemnation

Now, we've talked about why you're not to love the world—because of its character (what it is) and because of its corruption (what it does). Now, the third reason I want you to see, friend, is you're not to love the world because of its condemnation—where it is headed. Look, if you will, in verse 17—now, look at it: “[for] *the world passeth away*”—do you see that?—“*the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*” (1 John 2:17). Now, there's one sure thing about this world system: it's not going to be here forever; it is passing away. Only that which is in the will of God is going to abide forever.

So, let me ask you a question. Those of you in the balcony, let me ask you a question—I mean, from my heart to your heart. Listen to me: What is more important to you—the pleasures of the flesh or the joys of the Spirit? What is more important to you—that which is seen or that which is unseen? What is more important to you—the praise of man or the glory of God? What is more important to you—that which is temporal and transitory or that which is eternal and cannot pass away? If you're living for this world, you're painting the decks of a sinking ship. This world is passing away and the fashion thereof (1 John 2:17), and soon the mossy fingers of decay and the foul breath of decay are going to take away all those little toys and those little trinkets that you have. Remember, Jesus said, “*The prince of this world is judged*” (John 16:11). Satan sails a sinking ship; he rules a doomed domain. Long, long after this world system is passed away and long after this world as we know it, with its fashion, is turned to rust, and dust, and mold, and corruption, all those things that you've dreamed for and schemed for and sold your soul for will be junk, if they exist at all. Those who know the Lord will be sitting in the Kingdom, praising Him. You say, “Pastor, that's pie in the sky.” Well, I like pie, but it's more than pie in the sky.

Friend, those who live for Jesus in this world know what life is all about. I'd be a Christian if there were no Heaven or Hell just to know the Lord Jesus Christ in this life. Kind of fun to swim against the tide. It's good to be different; it's good to walk with the Lord. But friend, we're just pilgrims here on this earth. But, soon—and very soon—the trumpet will sound, and we're going to be caught up to meet the Lord. And, I want to remind you, when Noah went into the ark, he went in a minority; but when he came out, he came out a majority. You see, listen—listen: this world is passing away. “They that do the will of God abide forever” (1 John 2:17).

Do you know why the world is such a problem to so many people? The world is not really your problem. Look, if you will, in the Word of God, in verse 15—look at it: “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in [them]*” (1 John 2:15). You know why you love the world? Do you

want me to tell you why you love the world? Because that's all you've got to love. I mean, if I didn't know Jesus, I'd probably...I don't know what I'd do. I'd be a pessimist. I may even get drunk and stay drunk, if I didn't... Hey, folks, if you look around and you don't know Jesus Christ, what is there? *"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"* (1 John 2:15). It doesn't say that the love of the Father is not in him because he loves the world; he loves the world because the love of the Father is not in him. He doesn't have anything else to love. Friend, if you give me a good meal and wonderful dessert and everything that I want and then you come to me with a plate of stale crumbs and say, "Here, Pastor, eat it," I'd say, "No, thank you. I'm satisfied—I'm satisfied." You don't have to be in a back alley eating tin cans with the devil's Billy goats if you've been feasting on Jesus, amen? *"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"* (1 John 2:15).

Give your heart to Jesus. I'm telling you, folks—I'm telling you—the devil is a counterfeiter. He is a liar; he is a pervert. And, this world will never satisfy your heart. You were made to serve God. If any man love the world, it's simply because the love of the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15).

And, who is the love of the Father? Jesus Christ. *"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith"* (1 John 5:4). That's what John says. You put your faith where God puts your sins—on Jesus. Let the love of the Father come into your heart; you'll have *"joy unspeakable and full of glory"* (1 Peter 1:8). And, furthermore, you, my friend, will abide forever when this old earth, with its system, is gone. When Madison Avenue and the moguls on Wall Street are gone, you'll be with Jesus forever, but you'll have Him right now, also, moment by moment.

## Conclusion

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. One man was a godly man; he lived such a wonderful life. Another man looked at him, and he said, "You seem to have such peace and such joy. I'd give the world to have what you have." He said, "Well, that's just what it cost me—just what it cost me." You can't love Him and love the world at the same time. *"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"* (1 John 2:15).

If you want to be saved, would you pray a prayer like this? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. "Dear God"—just pray out of your heart—"Dear God, I know that You love me"—and friend, He does love you; He loves everybody in this world—"Lord, I know that You love me. I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust You"—now, pray this prayer out of your heart—"I do trust You, Jesus. I believe You're the Son of God. I believe You paid for my

sin with Your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And, like a little child, I trust You to save me. I don't ask for a feeling; I don't look for a sign. I stand on Your Word. You're my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my friend. Thank You for saving me. And now, Lord Jesus, because You died for me, I will live for You. I will obey You. I will make this public. I will not be ashamed of You, my Lord and Savior. In Your name I pray. Amen."

# Living in the Last Days

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: November 22, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 2:18–29**

## Outline

### Introduction

- A. The Intercession Factor
- B. The Soul-Winning Factor
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### Conclusion

## Introduction

**B**e finding 1 John, the second chapter, and when you've found it, look up here. And, let me tell you that education is costly, but ignorance will cost you far, far more. And, no child of God can afford to be ignorant in these dynamic days in which we're living. All of us have a feeling that the sands of time are running low for this generation, and most all of us feel that history as we know it is headed for a climax. Now, if that is true, time is ripe for the appearance of a person that the Bible calls the *antichrist*. There is a beast of a man lurking in the shadows of history, and he's about ready to step from the wings of the stage onto center stage. And, that's what our scripture deals with today.

Now, the Bible says that "*perilous times shall come*" (2 Timothy 3:1). May I say that perilous times are here? The dynamite is in place. The fuse is laid. The match has been struck. The days are numbered, and we need to be ready. Now, let me tell you some reasons that we need to be ready; and then, we're going to jump into the Word of God.



#### **A. The Intercession Factor**

We need to be ready because of the intercession factor. We need to be praying for this world. We need to get our heads out of the clouds of prophecy and get our knees on the floor and pray for this generation.

#### **B. The Soul-Winning Factor**

And also, the soul-winning factor—you see, dear friend, if you're living for this world only, all you're doing is rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. We need to be getting people into the lifeboats; we need to be getting them to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

#### **C. The Family Preparation Factor**

Thirdly, the family preparation factor—living in the last days is dangerous, and we as parents and grandparents need to be inculcating into the hearts and minds and lives of our children values and rock-ribbed truths.

#### **D. The Comfort Factor**

And finally, the comfort factor. When we know what the Bible says is going to come to pass and these things happen, we don't go around wringing our hands and saying, "The sky is falling! Look what the world is coming to!" We say, "Look who's coming to the world!" We understand that Jesus Christ is coming again.

Now, with all of that in mind, begin to read in 1 John, the second chapter, beginning in verse 18: *"Little children, it is the last time"*—1 John chapter 2, verse 18—*"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that the antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also"* (1 John 1:18–23). Now, I'm going to stop reading then. We're going to take up some more of this chapter, and we're going to go on through the end of the chapter. But, there are three things I want you to learn about: the time, the tyrant, and the triumph. And, I want you to keep these in your mind.

## I. The Time

Now, what is the time? The time is the last days, according to verse 18 (1 John 2:18). We are living in the last days, and we need to be awake. Turn to your neighbor and say, “Wake up. We’re living in the last days, and we need to be awake.” John says, “*Little children, it is the last time*” (1 John 2:18). Literally, that may be translated and is translated in some Bibles “the last hour.” Now, John said that 2,000 years ago. “Adrian, if John said 2,000 years ago that it was the last time, what happened? How could it have been the last time, because we’ve had two millenniums?” Now, here’s something you need to understand—that ever since Jesus Christ ascended into Glory, it has been the last time.

Now, the Old Testament, the former time, was preparing for the coming of Jesus Christ. After the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, we enter into a period of time called “the last time.” From the time that Jesus went up till the time that Jesus is coming back, that is the last time—that is the last hour. And, any time in that interval, Jesus Christ could come. All Christians, from the time of John to this time, are to be living with the expectancy that Jesus Christ may come at any moment. So many of us have the idea that the last time is out there and we’re moving toward it. No, we’re living in it.

Joyce and I went to see, one time, the Grand Canyon. Now, I was not afraid of falling into the Grand Canyon when we were driving toward it 100 miles away. I didn’t say 100 miles an hour—100 miles away, and 40 miles, and 30 miles, and finally we got to the Grand Canyon. And, there we went out to a place to watch, and there’s the rim of the Grand Canyon. And, while we were at the rim—we were not headed toward it; we were right on the very edge—now, we could have walked 50 miles right on the edge of the Grand Canyon—not headed toward it, but right on the edge of the Grand Canyon—the wrong step, we could’ve fallen in. As you know, anybody who goes to visit that marvelous monument...

Now, what I’m trying to say is that we’re not living...we’re not moving toward the last days; we’re living on the edge of the last days. Always, from the time that Jesus went up, till the time that He’s coming back, He could come at any moment. Put down the word *imminent*. Learn this about Bible prophecy: the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is imminent. Come up here close. I want to tell you something: there is no sign that we’re waiting for; there is no event in history that we’re waiting for. Jesus Christ could’ve come back three weeks after He ascended into Heaven, and He may come back this afternoon. You see, all of the Bible teaches that we are on the very edge—on the very brink. And, therefore, we should be yearning and not yawning. We should be ready for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, you say, “What about all of the signs of the times and all of this?” There are signs of the times, but these are not the times of the signs. Now, what I mean by that is this—that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is in two stages. First, the Lord Jesus Christ comes for His Church; that’s the Rapture. We’ll be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. That will be suddenly, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. And then, there will be the Great Tribulation here on this earth. And then, Jesus Christ will come back with His saints to rule and to reign for 1,000 years. We call that the Millennium.

Now, the Rapture has no sign. It could happen at any moment. There are many of signs for the revelation, when Jesus Christ comes back in glory and power with His saints—not for His saints, but with His saints. And, the Bible tells of many signs like that. Well, you say, “Adrian, are you trying to tell me that all of the things that we call the ‘signs of the times’ don’t apply—that we can’t read them?” Yes, we can read them. And, we can tell that there is an intensity that portends the coming of Christ.

A few days ago, I was in a meeting in Houston, Texas, where a group of us were fasting and praying for America. And, we prayed and fasted. In that same hotel where we were, there was another hotel of detectives who were studying forensics; and they had their signs up, and we had our signs up. Now, I walked past their signs, and I could read their signs. Their signs were not for me, but I could read them. And, there are many signs for the Nation Israel and other things that are happening; and I can read those signs, and I can tell. You see, coming events cast their shadows ahead of time. And, if Jesus Christ could’ve come in John’s day—yes, He could have—how much more should we be ready in these days when we see those signs that are gathering and coming?

Now, listen—listen: I want to show you beyond the shadow of any doubt that Jesus Christ may come at any moment. I want to give you some scriptures. Get a piece of paper and write these down. First Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 10: Paul is talking to the church at Thessalonica, and he says to them, among others things, “*And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead*” (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Jesus told those people—excuse me, the Apostle Paul told those early Christians, “Wait for Jesus.” Now, if Jesus could not have come in Paul’s day, that was foolish. “Wait for Jesus.” And, the word *wait* is a present infinitive. That means “to be constantly waiting.”

Philippians 3, verse 20: Paul said to the church at Philippi, “*For our conversation*”—our behavior—“*is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour*” (Philippians 3:20). Those people in Philippi were to be looking for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, He’d already come in redemption, but they were waiting for Him to come in rapture. First Corinthians 1, verse 7: Paul told the church at Corinth, “*So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 1:7). At

Thessalonica, wait for Jesus. At Philippi, wait for Jesus. At Corinth, wait for Jesus. And then, in the Book of Hebrews, chapter 9 and verse 28, the writer says, “*So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that looked for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation*” (Hebrews 9:28). You know what you’re to be doing? You’re to be learning of His coming. You’re to be living for His coming. You’re to be longing for His coming, and you’re to be looking for His coming. You are to be expecting the Lord Jesus Christ at any moment.

Paul told Titus in Titus 2, verse 13 about the grace of God that redeems us and makes us a peculiar people; and then, he says, “*Looking for that...glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*” (Titus 2:13). Look for Jesus. We’re not looking for some event. We’re not looking for the temple to be rebuilt. We’re not looking for the antichrist to appear. We’re not looking for the re-gathering of Israel. We’re not looking for earthquakes, and famines, and all of these things. We’re looking for Jesus—we’re looking for Jesus. I’m telling you, friend, that Jesus may come before I finish this sermon. His coming is imminent. And, if John said we’re living in the last days, he was right; and so are we.

Now, when He comes, He’s coming suddenly, in a moment. He’s coming in the twinkling of an eye (1 Corinthians 15:52). I wonder if I even believe it. I was preaching a sermon, one time, Brother Bob, as a younger preacher in Stuart, Florida. It was a revival crusade, and they had me staying in a hotel that was right by the railroad tracks. I had preached on the Second Coming of Jesus. I had preached on the trump: “*the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up...with them...to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). I preached that, and I went to sleep. It was about 1:00 a.m., and I was right by the railroad tracks. And, for whatever reason, the engineer on that locomotive revved the engine and blew the whistle right outside my window. Friend, I thought I’d be happy to see Jesus come; it scared me to death. I thought, “This is it! It has really happened.” I thought, friend, “The trumpet had sounded, and I was ready to go.” I take that back. I wasn’t frightened, but I was alarmed. I was shocked, but one of these days, just like that, Jesus is going to come. Friend, you say, “Well, I don’t think it’ll happen today.” Well, that’s a good sign that it might, for the Bible says, “*In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh*” (Matthew 24:44). So, the first point is—the first point is—we’re living in the last days. Be awake! Be awake! Be awake! Be awake! “*Little children, it is the last [hour]*” (1 John 2:18). In John’s time, in our time, at any moment, look for Jesus. He’s coming—He’s coming—any moment. Now, if they had reason to believe He was coming in their day, how much more do we, when we see these convergence of signs and coming events that cast a shadow ahead of time.

## II. The Tyrant

Here's the second point. Now, not only are these the last days, but number two, the antichrist is coming and we need to be aware—the antichrist is coming and we need to be aware. These are the last days; we need to be awake. The antichrist is coming; we need to be aware. Look again, if you will, in verse 18 of this same chapter: and he says here, “*Little children, it is the last time*”—okay, wake up—“*and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time*” (1 John 2:18). Now, there is a world ruler who is waiting in the wings, ready to step onto the center stage. I've told you that. And, his name—his title—is antichrist.

Now, it's interesting to know that the Bible describes the antichrist in many ways, but John is the only one who calls him *antichrist*. The Apostle John calls him *antichrist*. He has many aliases, but he has but one wicked heart. He is called the *son of perdition*. He is called the *man of sin*. He is called the *wicked one*. He is called the *lawless one*. He is called the *beast*. He is called the antichrist. Put down in your margin “2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 3”: there, he's called “*the man of sin*” (2 Thessalonians 2:3)—this same one. Listen to what Paul said: “*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition*” (2 Thessalonians 2:3)—the man of sin. This man is so wicked, this antichrist, that he is literally called the *man of sin*. That speaks of his character.

Let me tell you what some other translations say. I'm reading from the *King James*. One calls him the *man of lawlessness*. Another calls him—listen to this—the *incarnation of wickedness*. Another translation calls him the *champion of wickedness*. Another calls him *wickedness in human form*. The *King James* calls him the *man of sin*. He will be the epitome of evil. He will be the personification—the incarnation of evil—this one that John is calling the *antichrist*. Also, he's called, in this same passage, the *son of perdition*. *Perdition* means “judgment.” It speaks of the judgment that is surely awaiting him, as he's going to be cast into the lake of fire. Those who follow antichrist are following a loser. He is called in Revelation chapter 13 the beast that rises up out of the sea (Revelation 13:1). And, when the Bible calls him a *beast*, it speaks of his cruelty; it speaks of his fears and ferocious nature that would devour, and shred, and tear.

John calls him the *antichrist*. Now, why does John call him the *antichrist*? The word—the prefix—A-N-T-I has two meanings: number one, it means “against”; and number two, it means “instead of.” The word means the same thing, or the same word means two different things. He is the one who comes against Christ. And, how does he come against Christ? By substituting himself for Christ instead of Christ. He comes as

the devil's messiah. He comes as a diabolical substitute. He's one who opposes Christ.

#### **A. The Antichrist Is Devilish**

So, put down, first of all, this antichrist is devilish—he is devilish. The Bible says he “opposeth...all”—he opposes God and exalts himself above God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). He is antichrist. Jesus could say, when He was here in the flesh, *“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father”* (John 14:9). “When you’ve seen Me, you’ve seen My Father.” That’s what Jesus could say. The antichrist could say, “When you’ve seen me, you have seen my father.” You see, Jesus was the visible expression of the invisible God. The antichrist will be the visible expression of the invisible devil. As Jesus is to the Father, he will be to Satan. You see, Satan desires worship. He wants not only casualties; he wants converts. He wants that worship to be open, and he will receive it through his messiah, the devil. So, put down his antichrist is devilish.

#### **B. The Antichrist Is Divisive**

Number two: he is divisive. Look, if you will, in verse 19 of this same chapter. He’s talking now about other antichrists, and he says, *“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us”* (1 John 2:19). Almost all of these apostate cults began in the true church. Now, these people are not truly saved; they were not of us, but they went out from us. We’ve all seen people who have joined churches—they’ve never received the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. They may come down an aisle, present themselves for baptism, be baptized, be in a Sunday School class, be in a choir, and after a while, they go off and they get into some strange, weird, esoteric cult. Why do they do that? Well friend, they are of us, or they are with us; but they are not of us. They have no true *koinonia*. The Holy Spirit of God is not in them; and so, they go away. Somebody says, “Well, they lost their salvation.” No, they didn’t lose their salvation; they never had it. John says, *“They went out from us, but they were not [with] us”—“they were not of us...had they been of us, they...no doubt [would] have continued with us: but they went [away]”* (1 John 2:19). These antichristian cults—and the world is full of them—are a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. It has not taken God by surprise.

First Timothy chapter 4, verse 1: *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of [demons]”* (1 Timothy 4:1). *“They went out from us, but they were not of us”* (1 John 2:19). We see these people today—some of them maybe not leaving antichrist movements, but they just fall away. Does that mean they lost their salvation? No. We say around here *the faith that fizzles before the finish had a flaw from the first*. “They



were not of us...had they been [with] us”—“had they been of us”—had they had the Holy Spirit—“they would [have] no doubt...continued with us” (1 John 2:19).

### C. The Antichrist Is Deceptive

What about this antichrist? He is devilish, and the spirit of antichrist is devilish. It is divisive. It is deceptive. Look here, if you will, in verses 20 and following: Paul says—John says, *“But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also”* (1 John 2:20–23). Now, look in verse 26: *“These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you”* (1 John 2:26). The antichrist is devilish. He is divisive, and he is deceptive. He is a liar; he is the master liar. He learns this from his father, the devil, who is a liar and the father of it.

Now, what is he going to deceive men about, primarily? Who Jesus is—who Jesus is. Friend, antichrist is against you understanding just who Jesus is. The battle in every age, in every year, always centers on the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are wrong about Jesus, it doesn’t matter what you’re right about. Now folks, I want you to understand this. Listen again—verse 22: *“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son”* (1 John 2:22). If you’re wrong about the Son, you have missed the Father. You don’t understand it.

Now, put in your margin “1 John chapter 4”—“1 John chapter 4, verses 1 through 3”: here’s what the Apostle John says in two chapters later: *“Beloved, believe not every spirit”—you know, people say, “Well, I just, you know, I just have something in my heart.” Listen—“believe not every spirit, but try the spirits”—test the spirits—“whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world”* (1 John 4:1–3).

And then, John wrote another epistle, 2 John, and he says in verses 7 through 11: *“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that [you] lose not the things which [ye] have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son”—now, listen*



to this next thing—*“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine”*—what doctrine? The doctrine of Christ—*“receive him not into your house, and neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds”* (2 John 1:7–11). If somebody comes door-to-door visiting in your neighborhood, and they want to pull off some literature into your house or they want to have a Bible study in your house, you find out what they believe about Jesus Christ. You find out if they believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that God the Son is co-equal, co-eternal, with Almighty God, if He is God come in the flesh. And, if they don’t believe it, you can say, “There’s the sidewalk. You can get on it.” Now, give them a witness. Show them love, but don’t you let them make your home Hell’s headquarters, and don’t you, in a syrupy way, with sloppy agape, put your arms around them and say, “Well, we’re all headed toward the same place.” That’s a lie! They’re not headed to Heaven—not if they don’t know Jesus Christ.

It’s the spirit of antichrist, and what is that? He is against Christ and shows himself as a substitute for Christ. That’s what antichrist means. And so, this one who is coming—many antichrists are in the world, but there is one coming who is the antichrist—he is the epitome of all of it; he is the quintessential sinner, and he’s coming. He’s the beast, the son of perdition, the man of sin, the lawless one, and the spirit of antichrist is already in the world. And, he is devilish; he is divisive. Friend, he is deceptive.

#### **D. The Antichrist Is Destructive**

And, he is destructive. Notice here, if you will, as we continue to read. Look, if you will, in verse 24 of this same chapter: *“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life”* (1 John 2:24–25). The implication is that if you don’t, you’re going to miss eternal life; you’ll be everlastingly destroyed, ruined. And, you’re going to miss Jesus.

Now, everlasting life doesn’t mean eternal existence; you already have that. When God made you, God breathed into your nostrils the breath of life; you became a living soul. You could no more cease to exist than God Himself could cease to exist. Your soul will be in existence somewhere when the sun, moon, and stars have grown cold. You have everlasting existence. What you need is everlasting life. You’re going to spend eternity somewhere. I’ve decided to spend it in the nonsmoking section. He is destructive; he wants to wreck, and ruin, and damn your soul. You say, “That’s not loving.” Friend, the Apostle John wrote it; he’s called the *beloved disciple*.

He says, *“Little children, [it’s] the last time...there are many antichrists”* (1 John 2:18). Antichrist shall come. And so, we see what John is saying. He speaks of the time: it is the last time. Be awake! He speaks of the tyrant: the antichrist is coming. Be aware!

### **III. The Triumph**

And then, thank God, he speaks of the triumph. Our Lord is on His way, and we need to be abiding—awake, aware, and abiding. Now look, if you will, at a new word that’s going to jump out at us, and it’s the word abide. Look, if you will, in verse 24, and he says here in verse 24: *“Abide”*—*“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning”* (1 John 2:24). Look down at the end of verse 27: *“and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him”* (1 John 2:27). Now look, if you will, in verse 28: *“And now, little children, abide in him”* (1 John 2:28). Now, when you are awake and when you are aware, what do you do? How do you live in the last days? Well, you abide.

#### **A. Abide in the Word of God**

Now, first of all, listen—here’s what you need to teach your children. Get ready. You need to abide in the Word of God. Again, verse 24: *“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning”*—he’s talking about what you’ve heard—the Word—*“If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye...shall [also] continue in the Son, and in the Father”* (1 John 2:24). Now, the word *abide* means “to settle down, to be at home, to remain.” And so, let the Word of God be at home in you and you at home in the Word of God. Learn to appreciate the Word of God. Learn to appropriate the Word of God. Learn to apply the Word of God, because the way you know the Father and the Son is through the Word of God. And, not only do you need to abide, but parents, grandparents—you listen to me; listen to your pastor—you need to be putting mega doses of the Word of God into the hearts and minds of your children. And, they’re not going to get it just in Sunday School. You’re going to have to do it—you’re gonna have to do it. If not, they’re going to get blown away. I mean, the devil is so deceptive; it’s in the air like a fungus today. When our nation was founded, the Bible was the most quoted book by our Founding Fathers. And now, it is the most banned book in America. The Bible—the most banned book in America. Friend, they can read almost anything in public schools except the Word of God. Now, your mom and dad... And, the Bible says in these last days, you’re going to have to abide in the Word of God.

#### **B. Abide in the Spirit of God**

Number two: you have to abide in the Spirit of God. Look in verse 27, if you will, in this same chapter: *“But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you all things,*

*and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it [has] taught ye, ye shall abide in him*" (1 John 2:27). The Holy Spirit of God abides in you; you abide in Him. Now, notice he says the word anointing. It's charisma—is the word. Look in verse 20: he calls it up there an unction (1 John 2:20). It's the same word. *"But ye have an unction from the Holy One,"* a charisma (1 John 2:20). In the Old Testament, when they had a prophet, or a priest, or a king, and they were getting him ready for service, they would pour oil on him, and that was called a christening—an anointing—because that oil is an emblem—a symbol—of the Holy Spirit. Well, we are New Testament prophets, priests, and kings, and we have been anointed with the Holy Ghost. I mean, when we get saved, the Holy Spirit of God comes to abide in us; and therefore, we need to abide in Him. *He is resident in us; we need to make him president in us.* We need to—we need to—abide. Let us, first of all, abide in the Word of God and then abide in the Spirit of God, because he says you don't have any need that anyone teach you. You have an unction from the Holy One.

You say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, if I don't need anybody to teach me, I think I'll get up and get out of here. Or, why did we have Sunday school today?" No, no—you need to understand what he's saying. The Bible is not against human teachers; as a matter of fact, you read in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 11, "And he gave pastors and teachers for the edifying of the Church" (Ephesians 4:11–12). And, the Bible's not against study. The Bible says clearly and plainly, *"Study to shew [yourselves] approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed"* (2 Timothy 2:15). Thank God for teachers. Thank God for study. But friend, with all of that, you would never know—you would never know—apart from the Holy Spirit. Did you know that? Did you know that the Holy Spirit of God is the One who teaches you? Jesus said, "When He is come, He will teach you of all things" (John 14:26). That's the Holy Spirit of God. He is the divine teacher that says what this preacher is saying is true. He is the One who speaks to your heart. That's the reason why I've said thousands of times, I can preach truth, but only He can impart truth. Anything anybody else can talk you in... Anything I can talk you into somebody can else can talk you out of. But friend, you have an unction from the Holy One. You have the Holy Spirit of God, who opens your understanding, who illumines you, who helps you to know. Thank God for that, because the Bible says if it were not for him the antichrist would *"deceive the very elect"* (Matthew 24:24). Thank God that we have the Spirit of God in our hearts. And, you need to abide in Him so He can teach you in these last days.

Warren Wiersbe told a story about a man who was a missionary to the American Indians out on the West Coast, and he got an Indian that had been led to Christ—a very noble, wonderful man this Indian, but untaught. He didn't even know about denominations; he didn't know about false cults. He's just a babe in Christ, and they

brought him in to San Francisco. I believe it's San Francisco, maybe Los Angeles—makes no difference. Brought him there, and they were walking down the streets. And, there was a man on the street corner with an open Bible preaching and teaching. The missionary knew that that man was of a false cult. He knew what the man believed, and he just didn't want to try to explain to this young babe in Christ about false cults, and false teachers, and all of this. He was just a babe in Christ, so he thought maybe he wouldn't say anything. But, the Indian stopped and listened for a while, and then they walked on. And, the missionary, after a while, he said, "Well, what did you think about that man?" He said, "Me no like him." He said, "Well, why?" He said, "When he talks, something in me say, 'Liar, liar, liar.'" Now, that's the Holy Spirit saying, "That man's a liar." You see, we have an unction from the Holy One, and the Holy Spirit of God in our hearts is there to affirm the truth. Now, that doesn't mean it's just touchy-feely, because it is the Spirit of God that applies the Word of God and both go together to reveal the Son of God.

### **C. Abide in the Son of God**

So, here's the third thing that you abide in. Look, if you will now—first of all, abide in the Word of God (verse 22) (1 John 2:22). Secondly, abide in the Spirit of God (verse 27) (1 John 2:27). And finally, as a result, abide in the Son of God. Now, watch this—verse 28: *"And now, little children, abide in him"*—talking about Jesus—*"that, when he shall appear"*—He's coming—*"we may have confidence, and not be ashamed [of] him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, [you] know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him"* (1 John 2:28–29). Abide in him—abide in the Lord Jesus Christ. If the Word of God abides in you and you abide in it, and if the Spirit of God abides in you and you abide in Him, then the Son of God is going to be revealed in you. And, you will be at home with Jesus, and Jesus will be at home with you. And, when Jesus Christ comes—when Jesus Christ comes—you're not going to be alarmed; you're not going to be frightened; you're going to meet the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with anticipation, and boldness, and gladness.

And, I told you about being alarmed as a boy preacher. Well friend, I want to tell you, since that time, there's been...I can I use the words *paradigm shift*...in my heart and mind. I am so longing for Jesus to get here. I don't—I don't—dread His coming. You know, the early Christians had a word, *maranatha*. It means, *"Even so, come"*—come—*"Lord Jesus"* (Revelation 22:20). I want Him to come. I'm longing for Him to come. I'm looking for Him to come. I want to go home to be with the Lord Jesus. I'm not—I'm not—sick of this world. I enjoy life; I enjoy every day. But, my heart beats with anticipation for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You see, I'll meet Him with confidence.

I don't want to be ashamed when He comes.

When I was a little boy, my dad was in the Coast Guard, and I lived in West Palm Beach. And, he was stationed in Hobe Sound, Florida, and he drove a Model A Ford. And, he could come home that forty miles from Hobe Sound to home, when he would leave where he had to live up there and come see us. Before he would go off to do duty, he would tell my brother and me, Buddy and myself—to do this, and to do this, and to do this. And, we had yard work to do, and we had chores and so forth. And then, we knew that when Dad came home we had to report. Now folks, I must confess, your pastor was not always very diligent in doing everything that his father told him to do. Sometimes I was, and sometimes I wasn't. But, if you know anything about a Model A Ford—they have a peculiar sound—you can hear it about a block away. I could hear my dad's Model A Ford coming when he would come home. And, in our neighborhood, we'd be out playing baseball or whatever. If I saw that black Model A Ford coming, it had a running board on it—the kids today don't even know what a running board is; that's something that you step on to get into the car—if I had done what my dad told me to do, friend, when I'd hear that Model A Ford coming, you know, I'd just take off and run, jump on the running board, reach in the window, hug his neck, kiss him, and it's such a joy to see him. The other times when I heard that Model A Ford coming, I'd go the other way—go the other way. Why? Because I had not been abiding. I'd not been obeying. I'd not been doing what he told me to do. Now, he's my father either way. I'm going to meet Jesus, but when He comes, I want to meet Him with boldness. I want to meet Him with joy. I want to abide in Him.

What is the difference between Christ and antichrist? Antichrist is going to turn this world into a vast concentration camp and give everybody a number. Jesus calls His sheep by name. The big question is, when He comes, will your name be called or will your number be up? That's the whole thing, folks: Do you know Jesus? When He comes, we're going to be caught up *“to meet [Him] in the air: and so will we ever”*—ever—*“be with the Lord”* (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Now, sum it up. It is the last time—be awake. Antichrist is coming—be aware. Our Lord is on His way—be abiding. Abide in the Word of God. Abide in the Spirit of God; He's the inner teacher. Abide in the Son of God, so that when he appears you'll have confidence and not be ashamed at His coming, okay?

## Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. O God, O God, speak to hearts today. O my God, bring precious souls to Jesus. Lord, help men, women, boys, and girls to humble themselves at the feet of the One who died for them, who loves them. We know that the Spirit of

antichrist is the spirit of lying. There's so much lying in the world today. Lord, help people to come to the truth, to Jesus. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you want to be saved, would you just pray a prayer like this: "O God, I need You. My sin deserves judgment, but I need mercy. I want to be saved. Lord, help me today with all of my heart to trust in You. I do trust You, Lord Jesus. In Your wonderful name. Amen."

# Living in the Last Days

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 28, 2003

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 John 2:18–29

*“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.”*

1 JOHN 2:18

## Outline

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

This morning, we spoke of the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the signs of the times. I think it's fitting tonight that we talk about living in the last days. And turn, if you will—this time to the back of your Bible—to 1 John chapter 2, and we're going to begin reading in a moment in verse 18. And, while you're turning, let me tell you that if you're twice saved, Heaven-born, and Heaven-bound, you cannot afford to be ignorant of these dynamic days in which we're living. And, if you are not saved, how you need to hear the truth that I'm bringing tonight, that you might come to Jesus Christ, because the sands of time are running low. We don't know how many years, how many months, how many weeks, how many days, how many hours, how many minutes we have before we hear the shout, *“Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him”*



(Matthew 25:6). And, as a matter of fact, that may transpire before we have the “amen” to this service.

Now, the time is ripe not only for the Rapture of the Church but, immediately after that, the arrival of the antichrist. With that in mind, begin reading with me, if you will, 1 John chapter 2, and I begin reading in verse 18: *“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for...had they been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and...know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is an antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye [shall] also...continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, [ye] may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him”* (1 John 2:18–29).

Now, I say these are perilous times—pregnant times, if you will (about to bring forth)—as we mentioned this morning, and you need to be aware for several reasons.

### **A. The Intercession Factor**

First of all, you need to be aware for the intercession factor. You need to know how to pray. You need to know how to intercede for this world and for your loved ones and get them ready, that they might *“flee from the wrath to come”* (Matthew 3:7; Luke 3:7).

### **B. The Soul-Winning Factor**

Number two: Right along with the intercession factor is the soul-winning factor. The real proof that you believe in prophecy is not how many notes you get in your notebook, primarily, but do you have a heart—a hot heart—for lost souls? And, you *get your head out of the clouds of prophecy and onto the pavement of soul winning*.

### **C. The Family Preparation Factor**

There's another reason that you need to understand this, and that is the family preparation factor. You need to get all of your loved ones saved.

As we were coming to church tonight... David, who is our missionary son, is visiting with us. He, and Kelly, and their younger son, Stephen Paul, came a little early because David wanted to go to the bookstore. Joyce and I remained behind, and then we came. When we got up here to the church, Joyce said, "We were supposed to bring Jonathan." Now, Jonathan is the teenager there with them, and Jonathan is my beloved grandson. But, everybody went off and left Jonathan. And, we got all the way here to the church, and Jonathan was not in the car. Joyce had to go back and get Jonathan. On the way, while Joyce was going back, the phone rang in my office. It was Jonathan. And, Jonathan said, "What happened?" I said, "Well Jonathan, we just left you; that's what happened. And, Grammy is on the way to go get you." But, I said, "Jonathan, what if it had been the Rapture and you had been left behind?" I wanted him to think about that. I wanted to make sure and double sure that Jonathan knows Jesus Christ, as I want you to be sure and be double sure that you'll not be left behind. There's the family preparation factor.

### **D. The Comfort Factor**

There is the comfort factor. As I told you this morning, none of what we see happening today has taken God by surprise. There is no panic in Heaven. God knows all of these things—no fine print in the contract.

And so, let me lay several factors on your heart tonight that come out of this very rich passage of scripture that comes from 1 John. And, there's so much here tonight. I'm going to try to lay three or four factors on your heart that come out of this.

## **I. We Are Living in the Last Days, and You Need to Be Awake**

Number one: We are living in the last days, and you need to be awake. Look, if you will, again, in verse 18 of this chapter—look at it: "*Little children, it is the last time*" (1 John 2:18). Now, we are living in the last days. Beyond the shadow of a doubt, these are the last days. You say, "Well Pastor, how do you know they were the last days?" Because they were the last days in John's time. For 2,000 years, it has been the last day. As a matter of fact, this passage may be translated "the last hour." We're always on the brink of eternity. In John's day, it was the last hour.

"Well," you say, "if that is true, why hasn't Jesus returned?" Well, listen, friend—ever since the ascension of Jesus Christ, from that time to this time, we have been living on the brink of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the great teachings of the Bible is that His coming is always imminent. *Imminent* means it could happen momentarily, at

any time. The Old Testament, with its many prophecies, prepared us for the first coming of Jesus Christ. The New Testament prepares us for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Now, I preached this morning on signs, but I want to say the other side of that coin is this: there is no sign or event that needs to transpire before Jesus can come. We are living in the last days. Now, let me explain that to you.

There are two stages in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ: there's the stage that we call the Rapture, and there's the stage that we call the Revelation. The Rapture is when Jesus comes and takes the Church out and the Great Tribulation begins here on this earth. After the Rapture, Jesus comes—this time not for His saints, but with His saints, and unveils all of His glory. And, that's called the "apocalypse," or "the unveiling" or the *parousia*. All these are various words that describe Jesus coming in power and great glory. When He comes for the Church, He's coming secretly, like a thief in the night. But, when He comes in power and great glory, He's coming like the lightning shining from the East to the West. And so, the signs that we speak about in the Bible—all of these signs are not signs of the Rapture. They're really signs of the Revelation. "Well," you say, "well, Pastor Rogers, then why did you preach to us this morning?" Because if the signs of the revelation are here, we know the Rapture must be very close. That's what I'm saying. Friend, these signs could take place after the Rapture—all of them.

I was at a conference here a while back, and it was a conference for Christian workers. But, in the hotel, there was a conference for forensic detectives. One conference for forensic detectives and another for Christian workers. And, I saw the signs that talked about the detectives' meeting and pointing this way and all of the announcements and so forth. Those signs were not for me; they were for them, but I could read them very easily. And, it's the same way with the signs concerning the revelation of Jesus Christ. Those signs are primarily for those who will be left here after the Rapture, but if we can see those signs now, we know the Rapture must be very close, because coming events cast their shadow ahead of time.

But, there are really no signs for the first stage, the Rapture. The Rapture can take place at any moment. Now, I want to prove that. The Apostle John said, "*It is the last time*" (1 John 2:18)—I literally, again, "the last hour." Did you get that? Now, listen. Just jot these scriptures down very quickly.

First Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 10—Paul is telling the church at Thessalonica how they're to live, and here's what he says here in verse 10: "*And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come*" (1 Thessalonians 1:10). "The wrath to come" is the Great Tribulation. He says, "Now listen, folks—you folks at Thessalonica, I want you to wait for Jesus." Well, that wouldn't make any sense if it were not possible for Jesus to come. He

said, “You be waiting for Jesus.” That is a present infinitive. I know that’ll bless your heart—that’s a present infinitive. It means that we’re to be constantly waiting. Those people so long ago were to be waiting for Jesus.

Let me give you another one—Philippians chapter 3, verse 20: *“For our conversation”—the word “conversation” here literally means “behavior”—“our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Philippians 3:20). Paul said, “Look, we’re looking for Jesus—we are looking for Jesus.” Those early saints 2,000 years ago were looking for Jesus.

Let me give you another one—1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 7: Paul, talking about the spiritual gifts that the Corinthians had, said, *“That [you] come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 1:7). The early Christians were looking, longing, yearning, waiting for Jesus Christ to come.

Let me give you another one—Hebrews 9, verse 28: *“[For] Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation”* (Hebrews 9:28). They were to be looking for Jesus—those saints, 2,000 years ago.

Here’s another one: Titus chapter 2, verse 13 says we’re to be *“looking for...the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”* (Titus 2:13).

All of these teach us that at any moment, Jesus may come. Jesus could have come any moment from the time that the Apostle John wrote our text here in chapter 2 and verse 18 (1 John 2:18) up until this present time. And, that’s the reason Jesus gave us this scripture from Matthew 24, verses 48 through 51: He talked about a servant who was not ready for his master to return, and He said, *“[And] if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Matthew 24:48–51). What Jesus said, therefore, is that it is wicked not to expect and prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus, and it will result in judgment.

So, the last hour began in John’s day. We are living in the last days, indeed. I believe we’re living in the last of the last days. Now, there are signs of the times, but these signs of the times do not tell us that Jesus cannot come at any moment or could not have come at any moment. We’re always looking and waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

I’ve been in the ministry for more years than I can really realize, when I think about it. A half a century I’ve preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, and I’ve been preaching on the Second Coming. I believed in the Second Coming when I first began to preach it, and I still believe it. And, the anticipation and the nearness has never gone from me.

When I was a boy in college, I was preaching a revival meeting in Stuart, Florida. They put me in a hotel right near the railroad track. I didn't know it was near the railroad track. I had just preached a message on the Rapture, and in the middle of the night, a diesel locomotive outside my window blew the whistle. I was absolutely certain it was the Rapture. I mean, I'd never heard a noise like that. It was the most penetrating sound I'd ever heard—and after I'd been preaching and meditating on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ! And, I sat up in bed, and I said, "Oh, this is it. Here I go." But, I didn't go. I just stayed there in the bed.

But, I'm telling you, friend, one of these days, it's going to happen *"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"* (1 Corinthians 15:52). We're going to hear the shout: *"Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him"* (Matthew 25:6). So, what we need to say, first of all, is, very clearly, this is the last day, and we need to be awake.

## **II. The Antichrist Is Coming, and You Need to Be Aware**

Now, number two: The antichrist is coming. Not only is Jesus coming—the antichrist is coming, and we need to be aware. Look again in verse 18: *"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time"* (1 John 2:18). Now, there is a wicked, malevolent, ungodly person, who will be Satan in the flesh, who is waiting in the wings, waiting to be revealed after the Rapture of the Church. This antichrist is ready to step on to center stage. Now, it may surprise you to know that the Apostle John is the only one in the Bible who calls this man the "antichrist." He, like many criminals, has many aliases, but he has one heart and one mind. Let me give you some of the other names that he is called in the Bible.

He is called, for example, "the man of sin." Put this scripture down—2 Thessalonians 2, verse 3: *"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition"* (2 Thessalonians 2:3). He is saying that the day of wrath will not come—the Tribulation will not come—until that man of sin is revealed. The reason I use that phrase is that there is someone so wicked that the Bible calls him a "man of sin." The whole problem began with the sin of man, but it is going to end with the man of sin. The evolutionist wants us to believe that we have come from the beast. *We haven't come from the beast; we're headed to the beast, the man of sin.* The Bible calls him here "the man of sin."

Now, that's a very interesting phrase—"the man of sin." As a matter of fact, in my study, I looked it up in a number of different translations. Let me tell you how it's translated in various translations of the scripture. One calls him "the man of lawlessness." Another calls him, very interestingly, "the incarnation of wickedness." Another calls him "the champion of wickedness." Another calls him "wickedness in

human form.” The Apostle John calls him the “antichrist.”

He is called also, in this scripture that I gave you, in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 3, he’s called “*the son of perdition*” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). And, what that means—it speaks of the judgment that is awaiting him. The word “perdition” means “judgment.” And, the antichrist will not prevail; he’s headed to Hell. But, he is the son of perdition. And, by the way, the only other person called “the son of perdition” in the entire Bible is Judas.

Now, again, he is called—and I’ve already referenced this—he’s called “the beast.” In Revelation chapter 13, if you remember our study in the Book of the Revelation, he is called “the beast.” The Revelation is full of emblems and symbols. And so, this man, like a beast, is ferocious. He is cruel. He is fierce. He is bloodthirsty. But, John calls him, in our passage, the “antichrist.”

Now, if you were here this morning, you remember that I told you that the prefix *anti* means two things: it means “instead of” and it means “against.” It has two meanings. So, this is one who comes instead of Christ. That is, he is a false Christ who substitutes himself for Christ, therefore, to be against Christ. He is the counterfeit christ. He will be to the devil what Jesus is to the Father. Jesus said, “*He [who] hath seen me hath seen [my] Father*” (John 14:9). The antichrist will be able to say, “Who hath seen me hath seen my father.” Satan has always desired worship. Just as we’re to worship God the Father through God the Son, Satan, who mimics God, wants to receive worship through his antichrist, his false christ, the christ of the cults. Satan wants obvious, open, overt worship. So, tell you some things about the Antichrist—and let’s let them begin with the letter “D” so you can remember them.

#### **A. The Spirit of the Antichrist Is Devilish**

First of all, he is devilish. He is full of the devil. He is Satan incarnate.

#### **B. The Spirit of the Antichrist Is Divisive**

Number two: Not only is he devilish (the antichrist)—he is divisive. Look in verse 19 of our chapter here, if you will: “*[But] they went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us*” (1 John 2:19). In John’s day, there was a division in the church. There were some people who started in the church, but then they left; they went out. The “us” refers to the Church. And, there was a splinter movement; there was a breakaway movement. And, John says the power behind that division was the antichrist. The spirit of antichrist—that was already in the world in John’s day—divides churches. He says, “*They were not of us*” (1 John 2:19). That is, there was no true fellowship; there was no true union. They didn’t lose their salvation; they never had it. There was no real koinonia.



And so, the antichrist is the power behind all of the false cults that you have. A lot of the false cults have this stamp on them: “Made in America.” They have broken away from the true Church, and they have come out with a spirit of antichrist. And, they are preaching a false gospel. The Bible says in 1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 1: *“In the [last days, perilous times shall come, for men] shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits”* (1 Timothy 4:1). So, there is the spirit of antichrist that is devilish and the spirit of antichrist that is divisive.

### **C. The Spirit of the Antichrist Is Deceptive**

And then, there’s the spirit of antichrist that is deceptive. And, the Bible says the devil would *“deceive the very elect”* (Matthew 24:24) if it were possible. Look, if you will now, in verses 20 through 23: *“But ye have an unction”*—he talks about these who’ve gone out and split away, but he talks now to the true believers—*“But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and...know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is an antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also”* (1 John 2:20–23).

Now, what he’s saying is this antichrist, who is devilish and who’s divisive, is also very deceptive. And, notice the focal point of his deception: it is over the person of Jesus Christ. He wants to deny the facts about the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the devil doesn’t care what you believe. You can believe many things that are good, and right, and honorable; as long as you’re wrong about Jesus, he doesn’t care what else you may be right about. If you’re wrong about Jesus, nothing else really matters.

Let me give you a couple of ancillary verses here now. Remember, we’re talking about antichrist—the spirit of antichrist; not the antichrist, but the spirit of antichrist. The spirit of antichrist is devilish. The spirit of antichrist is divisive. The spirit of antichrist is deceptive.

Now, you’re in 1 John 2. Go over to 1 John chapter 4, and look here, beginning in verse 1: *“Beloved, believe not every spirit”*—don’t get the idea that everything that is spiritual is holy—*“believe not every spirit, but try”*—or, “test”—*“the spirits whether they are of God”*—now, he’s going to tell you how to test the spirits here, in a moment—*“because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus...is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh”*—Jesus the Messiah is come in the flesh—*“is not of God...this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world”* (1 John 4:1–3). The touchstone—the test point—is Jesus.



Now, remember this: when a false cult comes to your door, they will say, “Believe something.” When a real Christian comes to your door, they will say, “Receive someone,” and that someone is Jesus Christ. I was in the house one time when two Mormon elders—they call themselves “elders”; they hardly looked like they were ready to shave—came to the door, and they’d not been in the room very long before they said, “We’re here to tell you why we believe that Joseph Smith is a prophet.” I said, “Wait just a moment. Before you talk about Joseph, let’s talk about Jesus, because,” I said, “if you’re wrong about Jesus, it doesn’t matter what you think about Joe. Now, let’s talk about Jesus.” And, it became very obvious in a few moments that they did not believe that Jesus is God the Son and the Son of God.

Now, the Bible says, *“Believe not every spirit”—“test the spirit whether it be of God”* (1 John 4:1). Look. Go back. Now, you’re in 1 John. Go to 2 John, and look, if you will, in verse 7: *“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward”—*now, notice verse 9—*“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son”—*if a person is wrong about Jesus, they’re wrong, friend. Now, notice in verse 10—*“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine”—*what doctrine? The doctrine of Christ—*“receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds”* (2 John 1:7–11).

They come knocking at your door, and you’re there. “Well, how are you? Well, I’m So-and-so and So-and-so. We are here to so-and-so and so-and-so.” And, right away you know they don’t believe what you believe and they don’t worship the Jesus that you worship. But, don’t be so foolish as to say, “But, you know, we really need to understand this. Come on in my house. And, I’ll bring my neighbors, and I’ll let you teach us. We’ll have a Bible study here in my house.” You make your house headquarters for Hell. Don’t do that. “Well,” you say, “no, I wouldn’t do that. What I’d just say, you know, ‘It’s just so wonderful that you believe what you believe. God bless you—God bless you.’” No, you don’t say, “God bless you.” I mean, you don’t say, “God bless what you’re doing.” You can pray that they—their eyes, their hearts, their minds—will be opened. You can desire the welfare of God, but you cannot bid God speed on that evilness. It’s wickedness if they don’t understand the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is deceptive. The great fact of the Christian faith is that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. Remember this: the devil is not against religion. The devil is into religion up to his ears. He’s the father, the master, of New Ageism, and demonism, and witchcraft, and cultism. The antichrist is the devil’s messiah. He is the christ of the cults. He comes against Christ and instead of Christ. That’s what it’s all about. And, the spirit of antichrist

has been in the world for a long time. The devil wants converts as well as he wants casualties. And so, find out what any body believes about Jesus Christ. If they're wrong about Jesus Christ, then it doesn't matter what else they may be right about. If anybody denies the deity of Jesus Christ, he is of the spirit of antichrist. And so, this antichrist is devilish. This antichrist is divisive. This antichrist is deceptive.

#### **D. The Spirit of the Antichrist Is Destructive**

And, he is destructive. Now, look, if you will, in verse 24 and verse 25 of 1 John chapter 2: *"Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised [to] us, even eternal life"* (1 John 2:24–25). Now, the devil wants to destroy souls. The devil wants to steal from you eternal life. He wants to destroy you forever in Hell. Now, you will always have eternal existence. There will never be a time when you will not be. There was a time when you were not, but there never will be a time when you will not be. Now, the devil knows that you cannot have eternal life apart from faith in the crucified, risen, ascended Son of God. I'm looking forward to going to Heaven, and I'm looking forward to eternity. I made reservations in the non-smoking section. The devil wants to keep you out of Heaven. This is the spirit of antichrist. Now, what I've said is that it's the last days—you need to be awake. The antichrist is coming—you need to be aware.

### **III. Our Lord Is on His Way, and You Need to Be Abiding**

Here's the third thing: our Lord is on His way, and you need to be abiding. Now, John here picks up an interesting word, and he uses it over and over again. Look, if you will, in verse 24: *"Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning"* (1 John 2:24). Look in verse 27: *"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you"* (1 John 2:27). Look, if you will, in verse 28: *"And now, little children, abide in him"* (1 John 2:28). Do you see that?

Now, what's he saying to us? What's he saying to Bellevue? What's he saying to me? What's he saying to you? That, if it's the last days and we need to be awake—if antichrist is coming and the Great Tribulation, we need to be aware—then our Lord is on His way, and we need to be abiding.

Now, what does the word "abide" mean? Well, literally, it means "to be at home"—"to be at home." *If I built a house and say, "This is where you are to abide," then that's your house. That's where you dwell; that's where you are to be. It means "to make yourself at home."* Now, John tells the folks at Bellevue—tells Adrian, tells Jim, and Mark, and all of us, those in the choir—three things that we're to do in these days in which we live. Now, here's what we're to do:

### A. We're to Be at Home in the Word of God

We're to be at home in the Word of God—we're to be at home in the Word of God. Look in verse 24: *“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning”—* now, what's he talking about? Here's the Word of God (that which you've heard) —*“If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye [shall] also...continue in the Son, and in the Father”* (1 John 2:24). You are to make yourself at home in the Word of God.

Now, many Christians are failing to do this. You need to appreciate the Word of God; and then, you need to appropriate the Word of God. Then, you need to assimilate the Word of God. You need to ask God to inculcate in you in this coming year a hunger for the Word of God, because what happens is this. Notice what he says here. What happens when the Word of God abides in you? When the Word of God abides in you, he says, you will continue in the Father and in the Son (1 John 2:24). And, that's what you want. You want the Father and the Son. Look in verse 24—look at it again: *“If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye...shall continue in the Son, and in the Father”* (1 John 2:24).

Now, do you want to know the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son? You want to know the Father? Then you need to abide in the Word of God. You need to get this into the hearts and minds of your children—the Word of God. Not just giving them admonition, and good advice and food and clothes, and a good example—you need to saturate them with the Word of God. America needs the Word of God. That's one of the reasons I'm so grateful for this church and Love Worth Finding Ministries. Did you know that the most quoted book of the Founding Fathers of the United States—the most quoted book of our Founding Fathers—was the Bible? Today, it is the most censored book. That's an amazing thing—an amazing thing. What do we need to do? Make yourself at home in the Word of God.

### B. We're to Be at Home with the Spirit of God

Number two: Make yourself at home with the Spirit of God. Look again, now, in verse 27: *“But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but...the same anointing teacheth you...all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him”* (1 John 2:27).

Now, the anointing is called here “in him”—H-I-M. In the Old Testament, there was something called an “anointing.” It was a ceremony. It took place with oil. If there was a king or a prophet or a priest, they would take oil, and they would put oil on him—and they called that the “anointing.” It was the anointing oil; they would put that oil on him. And, that anointing, that oil, was an emblem, a symbol, a visual lesson, of the Holy Spirit. Now, John is picking up on that, and he says, “You have an anointing. You have

an unction.” In verse 20, it’s called an “unction” (1 John 2:20). Do you see that in verse 20, if you have a *King James*? It’s the same word; it’s just translated differently. It means an “anointing.” It’s just translated differently. Now, those of us who have the Word of God—and we make ourselves at home in the Word of God—then we also need to abide in the Spirit of God, make ourselves at home with the Holy Spirit, because He’s the One who teaches us to understand the Bible.

I pray over the Bible. I ask God to open my eyes to help me to understand the Bible. You see, the Christian has a built-in guidance system, and he has a built-in alarm system. Put this verse down: John 14, verse 26. Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit. He calls Him “the Comforter.” And, the word “Comforter” there does not mean, “Now, now, there; poor thing.” It’s a word that means, “with strength”—“comfort.” Think of a fortress. Think of your forte, your strength. Jesus says, “The One who’s going to give you strength...” *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you”* (John 14:26).

Now, this is what John is saying here in this passage of scripture—that it is the Holy Spirit who is going to teach you. Notice again in verse 27: *“But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man [shall] teach you”* (1 John 2:27). Well, now, wait a minute—that’s what I’m doing right now, isn’t it? Aren’t I teaching you? And yet, John says, “You don’t need any man to teach you.” There’s no contradiction here. The Bible says in Ephesians 4 that God gave to the church pastor-teachers (Ephesians 4:11). But, what he is saying is that the real teacher—and this is deep, but I want you to get it—the real teacher is not Adrian; the real teacher is the Holy Spirit.

Before I came out here, I got on my knees and prayed—I do, unless there is an emergency, every time I come out here. I get on my knees and pray, because—and you’ve heard me say this a thousand times—*anything I can talk you into somebody else can talk you out of*. The One who teaches you is the Holy Spirit of God—He’s the Holy Spirit of God. God uses human teachers, but the One who teaches you—the One who really helps you to understand—is the Spirit of God. Now, the Bible is not against human teachers, and certainly, the Bible is not against studying, for the Bible says we’re to *“study to shew [ourselves] approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed”* (2 Timothy 2:15). But, the true teacher is the Holy Spirit.

I think I can illustrate this by a story that Warren Wiersbe told one time of a missionary friend that he had. This missionary friend was a missionary to the Indians, and he’d won an Indian to Christ. And, he’d brought the Indian to the big city. The Indian had never been out of the woods to the big city, and he was seeing all the sights and sounds. And, this Indian was a true believer in Christ, but he didn’t understand all of the

divisions, and all of the denominations, and all the cults and all. You know, he was just a pure-hearted, simple-minded, intelligent, but simple-minded Christian. And, as they were going down the streets of the big city, there was a man standing there on the street corner who was holding forth, and he was preaching. But, this man was of a false cult. And, the missionary knew it was a false cult, and the Indian stopped to listen because he said, “There’s the Word of God. I want to hear it.” And, the missionary thought, “Should I go in and say, ‘Don’t pay attention to him. Don’t listen to him,’ because it might make me look a little jealous or narrow?” He didn’t know quite what to do. He just breathed a prayer. And, the Indian listened for a while and then came and walked alongside this missionary. Now remember, this Indian was a pure-hearted Christian. And, after a while, the missionary said, “What did you think of the teacher?” The Indian said, “Me no like him.” He said, “Well, why not?” He said, “Something in me said, ‘Liar, liar, liar.’” That’s the Holy Spirit—that’s the Holy Spirit. God gives us a built-in radar. God gives us a guidance system. God takes the Word of God and opens the Word of God so we can understand it and know it.

### **C. We’re to Be at Home with the Son of God**

So, you make yourself at home in the Word of God. Then, you make yourself at home with the Spirit of God. And, when you do that, you’re going to make yourself at home with the very Son of God. Look here, now, in verses 28 and 29 of this same chapter: “*And now, little children, abide in him*”—now, he’s talking about Jesus—“*that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming*” (1 John 2:28). Now, you see, what he’s saying, now, is that we are to be at home with the very Son of God. We’re to trust Him and obey Him. And, the Word of God and the Spirit of God will make the Son of God real in your heart. And, when the Word of God and the Spirit of God make the Son of God real in your heart, then you have confidence and you’re not going to be ashamed when Jesus comes again.

Back in World War II, I was a little boy. My dad was in the United States Coast Guard, and my dad was stationed at Hope Sound, Florida—not far from our house, which was really good, because he could come home from time to time. When he’d get a furlough or a time in the week, sometimes he could drive that 40 or 50 miles to our house. Gasoline was very hard to get; it was rationed. It all went to the war effort. And, my dad got the most economical car that he could get that burned the least gas. He bought an old Model A—black Model A—Ford (the same car I learned how to drive in, a 1931 Model A Ford). And, he bought that car. And, before my dad would go off, back to the base, he would give my brother and I instructions. He would tell us what we were to do around the house, how we were to mind mother, and how we were to clean the yard, and how we would do this and this and this and this. And then, when he came home, he

always checked up. Sometimes I'd love to see him come, and sometimes I hated to see him come. It all depended on whether or not I had been doing what my dad told me to do.

And, I could hear that Model A Ford coming. We just lived out of doors all the time. We didn't have air conditioning; we didn't have television—either one. There was no such thing as a Gameboy. We lived outdoors. And, the weather's nice down in South Florida. But, I could hear that Model A Ford; it had a distinctive sound. I could hear my dad's car almost before I could see it. And, it had a running board; it's something that you can stand on, step on. I thought those were out of date until they began to build these SUVs, and now they've got a running board on them so you can step up into them. The old Model As had a running board, and people would stand on the Model A Ford running board sometimes, and hang outside the car, and just ride along.

And, when my dad would come, I would run, if I had been good—if I had been obeying my mother and been doing what my dad told me to do—because I loved my dad very much. And, I would run to meet that car. And, he'd slow down, and I'd jump on the running board, and reach in the window, and hug my daddy's neck, and just ride home with my daddy. It's something like the Second Coming of the Lord—just, you know, I hear the sound, and I go to meet Him, and He's coming to meet me, and we go home together. It's just a really wonderful thing. But, I want to tell you something, friend: there were times, when I heard that Model A, I did not want to run to meet it; I wanted to run and hide. Now, it all depended on what I'd been doing and how I'd been living. You know, this is what John is saying: *“Little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, [you] may have confidence [before him], and not be ashamed...at his coming”* (1 John 2:28).

Now, if the trumpet were to sound right now—and you say, “I'm truly saved, Pastor—I'm truly saved”—but I think some of you want to get under the seat. You say, “Oh, no! Here I am with this grudge in my heart. Here I am with that beer in my icebox. Here I am with God's tithe in my pocket. Here I am unprepared, un-prayed-up. Here I am not a soul winner.”

*Must I go, and empty handed?*

*Must I meet my Savior so?*

*[Without] one soul with which to greet Him,*

*Must I empty handed go? (Charles C. Luther).*

*“Little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, [you] may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming”* (1 John 2:28).

Make yourself at home in the Word of God. Make yourself at home with the Spirit of God. Make yourself at home with the Son of God, so that when He appears, you'll not be meeting in the Rapture someone you've only heard about, but you'll be meeting



someone you know heart to heart.

Jim, I love that song you sang tonight. You know I love it—"It Will be Worth It All When We See Jesus." You think about it. We may see Him in the next 15 minutes. Won't it be great when we see the One who loved us enough that He laid down His life for us—the One who has been constantly with us? It's the last time—be awake. The antichrist is coming—be aware. Jesus is coming—be abiding. Abide in the Word of God. Abide with the Spirit of God. Abide in the Son of God, that when He comes, you'll have confidence and not be ashamed (1 John 2:28).

## Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. Are you ready for Jesus to come? Would you be left behind if He came tonight? You say, "No, I know I'm saved." Well, would you have confidence, or would you be ashamed at His coming?

We're going to have a prayer, and if you're not saved, I want to guide you in receiving Christ. If you believe the facts of the gospel—that you're a sinner and your sin deserves judgment in Hell, but you know that Jesus suffered, bled, and died on the cross for you, that you might be forgiven—if you know that He shed His blood on your behalf, took your sin punishment and carried it to the cross, and if you know that salvation is by faith (you can never earn it or deserve it; you receive it as a gift), you're a candidate to be saved tonight, right where you are.

Now, let me guide you in this prayer. Would you pray like this: "Dear God, I'm lost, and I need to be saved"—you may not like saying that you're lost, but if it's true, just say it. God knows your heart, and you know it—"God, 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—I do. I believe You're the Son of God that died for my sin on the cross. I believe that God raised You from the dead—I believe it. And now, Lord Jesus, I open my heart. I receive You into my life as my Lord, Savior, and Master, and I yield my life to You. And, I just thank You for doing it. I don't look for a sign; I don't ask for a feeling. Lord, I'm standing on Your Word. You promised to save me, and I trust You to do it. Thank You very much. Thank You, Jesus. Now, Lord, begin to make me the person You want me to be, and help me never, ever to be ashamed of You. And, give me the courage, now, Lord, to make this public, because I really mean business. In Your name I pray. Amen"?

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer, I'm going to give you an opportunity to help answer that prayer, to make it public. There's something about a public acknowledgement of Jesus Christ that settles it and seals it—that shames the devil and gives glory to God. Standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front will be a man of God, a minister of our church, to welcome those of you who'll be



coming. And if, tonight, you prayed and asked Christ to come into your heart—or maybe you did it some other time; maybe at your kitchen sink, in your bedroom, in your automobile, at school sometime—but you’re willing, tonight, to openly and publicly acknowledge Him as your Lord and Savior, the One who died for you, I’m going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward. You say, “Pastor, I’ve never done that. What do you say when you go down there?” I suggest that you might say, “I’m trusting Jesus.” That’ll sound good to you in your ear; it’ll fit just right in your mouth: “I’m trusting Jesus.” “What will happen?” We’ll rejoice. We’ll give you some scripture to stand on, answer any questions, seal it with you in prayer. What a great way to end the old year and begin a brand new year with Christ in your heart and Heaven as your home!

Others of you may have already been saved but you need a church home. May I invite you to come and be a part of the Bellevue family, if you’re saved? Now, I want to remind you that if you’re not a member here, you need to be a member somewhere—an active, participating member. If this is where you attend, especially on Sunday night, it’s probably where God is speaking to you and probably where you need to belong. But, if you don’t have a church home where you’re growing and serving God, I invite you to come and say, “I want to place my membership here,” and we’ll tell you how you may become a member of this glorious church. Some are coming, saying, “I’m trusting Jesus”—others, “I want to place my membership here.”

Now, there’s a third category tonight, and these are people who’ve said, “Pastor Rogers, I’ve not really been abiding in the Word of God, abiding in the Spirit of God, abiding in the Son of God like I should, and want, and ought. Maybe, compared to other people, I’m doing pretty good, but that’s not really the comparison. Pastor, I want a fresh start. I just want to begin again with Jesus—not to get saved all over again. One salvation is enough. But, I just want a fresh start spiritually.” You may want to come and not speak to one of the ministers. Just go to one of these kneeling benches, or just come here and kneel at the stairs and do business with God. And, when you’ve done it, go back to your seat. But, if you need to be saved—or you prayed and asked Christ to come into your heart, and you’ve never really publicly acknowledged Him—you come to the minister and say, “I’m trusting Christ.” If you need a church home, you come and make that public.

Let’s stand together. You step out and come, right now.

# When We All Get to Heaven

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** November 29, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 John 3:1–3

*“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”*

1 JOHN 3:2

## Outline

### Introduction

- I. The Christian's Dignity
  - A. The Father's Care
  - B. The Father's Correction
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- II. The Christian's Destiny
  - A. Christ Is Going to Appear
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- III. The Christian's Duty
  - A. You Ought to Be Looking for His Coming
  - B. You Ought to Be Living for His Coming
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### Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, would you take your Bibles and find 1 John chapter 3? We're making our way through this wonderful Book of 1 John—this epistle written by the beloved apostle. And, we're calling this Bible study “The Sweetest Fellowship This Side of Heaven.” But folks, we're going to move our fellowship right on up and right on over to Heaven. Now, not everybody—not everybody—is enjoying life. As a matter of fact, to borrow a phrase from another, many are living lives of quiet desperation. “A crust of bread, a corner to sleep in; a minute to smile and an hour to weep in; a pint of joy and a peck of trouble; and never a laugh but the moan comes double. And this is life,” wrote one. Not if you know Jesus—not if you know Jesus.

Friend, to know Jesus is life eternal. Jesus said, “[I've] come that [you] might have life, and...have it...abundantly” (John 10:10). And, I'm here to tell you that a rich man is

poor without Jesus and a strong man is weak without Jesus. And, an educated man is ignorant until he comes to know the Lord Jesus Christ. But, if you don't know Jesus—I mean, if you don't have Christ—what hope have you?

Ernest Hemingway was brilliant, gifted, but he took his own life. And, he wrote, concerning those of us who live here on Planet Earth—he says. “It seems as if we are a colony of ants”—A-N-T-S—ants—“living on the end of a burning log.” That’s the hope that people have without Christ, which is no hope at all. A French critic wrote this: “The universe is indifferent. Who created it? Why are we here on this puny mud heap, spinning in infinite space.” And then, he said, “I haven’t the slightest idea, and I’m sure that no one has.” Well, I do, because I have the Word of God. I have Jesus Christ. I have the Holy Spirit within me, and you can also. You see, without Jesus, nothing makes sense. *Man is ignorant of his past, and he’s afraid of his future; so, he’s somewhere in-between mystery and misery.* But oh, if you only know the Lord Jesus Christ, you have the sweetest fellowship this side of Heaven. And then, think of the fellowship when we all get to Heaven!

First John 3, verse 1: *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called”—now, watch this—“the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure”* (1 John 3:1–3).

Now, there are three things that I want you to think about today: I want you to think about the Christian’s dignity; and I want you to think about the Christian’s destiny; and I want you to think about the Christian’s duty. And, they’re all right here, so you can remember that.

## **I. The Christian’s Dignity**

Now, first of all, we’re going to think about the Christian’s dignity—what we are. Look at this verse again: *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not”* (1 John 3:1). Do you know this word—“what manner”—“what manner”—“of love the Father hath bestowed upon us” (1 John 3:1). John says, “Look at that. Behold it. I mean, look at it. What manner of love!” Do you know what that word literally means? It is a Greek phrase which means “something from out of this world.” “What manner”—it literally means, “What otherworldly kind of love, what love not from this planet, what indescribable, unknown quality is this love! Behold, what manner of love! It is out of this world that the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God” (1 John 3:1).

Now, I hope, I hope, I hope that what caused John to say, “Behold. Consider it”—I pray that will grip your heart today. Now folks, listen—we are not just *called* “sons of God” (1 John 3:1)—we *are* sons and daughters of God. Now, does that sink into you? That may not sink into you; but friend, listen—if I am a child of God, I’m a royal blueblood. I’m a child of the King. Just call me Prince Adrian. I am a child of the King, and so are you.

I was reading this morning in Hebrews. I want you to turn to Hebrews chapter 1 with me, if you will, for just a minute—chapter 2, rather. And, it speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, look, if you will, in verse 10: “*For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things*”—that is, “everything was made for Him and by Him”—“*in bringing many sons unto glory*”—that’s us—“*many sons*”—“*to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth*”—the word *sanctify*—it means “to be set apart for God”—“*For both he that sanctifieth*”—that’s Jesus—“*and they who are sanctified are all of one*”—now, what that means in plain English is that Jesus is in me, and I am in Christ, and we are one together. And then, look at this next phrase—“*For which cause*”—now, don’t miss this—“*he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church while I sing praise unto thee*” (Hebrews 2:10–12).

Hey, are you ashamed of Jesus? He’s not ashamed of you. He’s not ashamed to call you *brother*. He’s not ashamed to call you *sister*. And, He showed up here this morning; and when we were singing about His name in the midst of the church, He is here singing with us. He’s here. And, we are sons of God. Listen, the Bible says they “are all of one” (Hebrews 2:11) in this passage in Hebrews. That means we share the same nature; that means we are partakers of the divine nature. That means I am a blood brother of Jesus Christ. That’s a good place for an “amen.” I am a blood brother—you are a blood brother—of Jesus. He has my nature because He took human nature; I have His nature because I have been born of God. And, we are sons, daughters, of God, and Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call us His brothers. Hey, folks! Dear God, open our hearts today to understand this. If you could only understand! “*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God*” (1 John 3:1)—next of kin to the Holy Trinity, blood brothers with the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **A. The Father’s Care**

Now, unless you accuse me of delusions of grandeur, let me refer you to two other verses—several other verses. John 17—just write this in your margin; I’ll read it for you—John 17, verses 21 through 23: Jesus is praying His great High-Priestly prayer, and He prays, “[*Father,*] *that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in*

*thee, that they*”—“us,” talking about us—“also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me”—now, watch this—“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one”—now, watch this—“and that the world may know that thou hast...loved them, as thou hast loved me” (John 17:21–23). Now, how much does God love His Son, Jesus? Well, let me ask you a question: Does He love Jesus more than He loves you? That’s not what this says. Now folks, you say, “No, I can’t take that in,” but it is true. There’s nothing you can do to make God love you anymore than He loves you. He loves you as much as He loves His own dear Son. Jesus prayed, “Father, help them to know—help them to know—that Thou hast loved them even as You loved me” (John 17:23). You see, we are the sons and the daughters of God.

In Romans chapter 8 and verse 28, the Bible says that—verse 29, rather: “*For whom he did foreknow, [them] he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he*”—God’s Son—“*might be the firstborn among many brethren*” (Romans 8:29). He’s the first-born Son, but He’s just the first-born in a family of many brothers. We are—we are—brothers of Jesus, sons of God, literally. And, that’s the reason Galatians 4 says that “*God [has] sent forth the Spirit of his Son into [our] hearts, crying, Abba, Father*” (Galatians 4:6). Do you know what “Abba, Father” means? It means “Daddy, Father.” It’s just an Aramaic diminutive; it means “Daddy.” You know, I love for my children to call me *Daddy*. That just blesses me. Now, they may be formal and call me *Father*, and that’s okay; but I like Daddy. And, we have the Spirit of God in our hearts. And, I don’t mean this irreverently, but we can speak to God and call Him *Abba, Father*. *Abba* literally means “Daddy,” Father. And, because of that—because I’m the son of God, because Jesus Christ is my brother—I have my Father’s care; I’m not a beggar. My Father’s obligated to take care of me, and He will. That’s the reason worry is so pagan.

Jesus said in Matthew chapter 6, verse 26: “*Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they...gather into barns; [and] yet your...Father feedeth them*”—“*your heavenly Father feedeth them*”—“*Are ye not much better than they?*” (Matthew 6:26). Do you know what Jesus is saying? What farmer would feed His chickens and starve His children? Now friend, if God takes care of the birds of the air—come up here close; I’m going to tell you something—if you are a child of God, God is obligated to take care of you. You say, “Then why don’t I have more money in the bank?” You don’t need money in the bank if you need God. “[*Once I was*] *young...now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread*” (Psalm 37:25). I want to ask you a question: Which would you rather have—a warehouse full of bread or a father who owns a bakery? Listen, that bread in the warehouse can get stale—nothing better than fresh bread. Give us today our daily bread. If God feeds the fowls of the air, don’t

you think He's going to take care of you? Yes, He is. You see, *"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God"* (1 John 3:1).

## **B. The Father's Correction**

Not only do you have the Father's care, but you have the Father's correction. Why do you have trouble sometimes? Because God loves you. Did you know that God sometimes engineers your trouble? Put this verse down—Hebrews chapter 12, verses 5–7: *"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth"*—every one of us have dads and moms that say, "Son, Daughter, I'm doing this because I love you." I've often said my dad loved me far more than he loved my brother—*"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"* (Hebrews 12:5–7). Now, that doesn't mean God doesn't love us when He chastens us; it means that God does love us.

Here's a little boy playing out in the yard. He gets in the mud; he's covered with mud from head to foot. His father comes to the door and sees him—says, "Son, you can't come in the house like that. Come out here in the yard." And, the father takes the garden hose and just rinses that little boy off before he lets him come in. Now, it's not the son that the father is rejecting; it is the mud. And, sometimes God just has to hose us down, doesn't He? I mean—I mean, folks—it's not that He rejects us when He does that. Actually, it's because He loves us that He does that.

## **C. The Father's Compassion**

And then, you have—not only do you have the Father's care and the Father's correction, but you have the Father's compassion. Oh friend, I think of how I love my children. I have a child one time who went through surgery. And, I can remember taking that baby there, and handing the baby over to the doctor, and thinking, "O God, if I could only take the place of that child, I would gladly do it, that the child might not have to go through that." *"As a father pitieth his children"*—the Bible says—*"so the LORD pitieth them that fear him"* (Psalm 103:13). Oh, He cares for you. His heart is broken when your heart is broken; and, therefore, it ought to be easy to talk with Him. You don't talk with Him as judge; He is judge, but for you He's more than judge. You don't talk to Him as ruler; He is ruler. You don't talk to Him as King; He is King. But, you talk to Him as Father. *"God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into [our] hearts, crying, Abba, Father"* (Galatians 4:6).

## D. The Father's Companionship

And, you have the Father's companionship. I'm never alone. God is real to me. I don't say that braggingly; it would be strange if I could not say that. I can be shut up alone with Him, and He's never too busy to talk with me. Sometimes I get busy, and you know the phone: there's a certain tyranny of the telephone. And, the phone rings, and you don't want to answer it and you hate not to answer it. And, sometimes when I will be just...work will be piled up like this and the phone will ring, I say, "Oh, but I pick it up and if, on the other end, somebody says, "Daddy," I say, "What do you want?" All the difference in the world. And, if they say, "Papa," friend, we'll talk for hours. Now listen—what is that? There is a relationship with Almighty God that is so wonderful. This is what John is talking about: *"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God"* (1 John 3:1). We have, folks, His care. We have His correction. We have His compassion. We have His companionship. He is our Father. Christ is our brother. He's not ashamed to call us *brother*. We are a part of the family of God. That's wonderful! You may think that He's forgotten you, but He hasn't.

I heard about what the Indians do, sometimes, to bring a young boy from that passage of boyhood to young manhood. They take an Indian lad out (in yesteryear), and they would put him out there in the forest where the wild animals were. And, they would draw a circle and put that young Indian in that circle, and he would be told, "You cannot leave this circle all night long. You will stay out here by yourself." They gave him a little knife. That's all he had to protect himself with. And, the little Indian boy would stand there in the middle of the circle, and the darkness would fall. And, he could hear all of the wild animals, and the hoots of the owls, and the howls of the coyotes, and all of those things out there. And, the little boy would just stand there in the middle of the circle and just tremble, 'til finally out of exhaustion he would crumple on the ground and go to sleep. And, when he would wake up in the morning and the sun would come up, he would see his father standing right outside that circle with a drawn bow. Your Father is watching over you, friend. I want to tell you, He is there. You may think that you're alone, but you're not alone. *"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God"* (1 John 3:1).

## II. The Christian's Destiny

So, first of all, write down "my dignity—what I am." I am a son of God. I am a royal blueblood. I am next of kin to the Holy Trinity, and Jesus is not ashamed to call me His brother. Now folks, that's pretty good. As a matter of fact, that's glorious. Now, here's the second thing, because it gets better: not only do you see our dignity and what we are, but now notice our destiny and what we will be. Now, continue to read: *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know*



*that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). That is incredible.*

Now, what John is telling us is, first of all, there are some things we don’t know. That ought to be very comforting to you—that there are some things that you’re not supposed to know. You know one way to give a good witness for the Lord Jesus Christ? Just to tell what you know, not what you don’t know. So many of us are afraid to witness because we’re so afraid somebody’s going to ask us a question we don’t know the answer to. Don’t worry about it! Let me give you the perfect answer: say, “I don’t know.” Isn’t that a good answer? You know, if you tell people you don’t know, when you don’t know, then maybe they’ll believe you when you tell them you do know, when you do know. Will Rogers said, “Men don’t show their ignorance by not knowing so much as they do by knowing so much that ain’t so.” And, there are certain things that you don’t know, and there are a lot of things about the future you don’t know. Don’t worry about it. These things have been kept from us on purpose.

When the Apostle Paul was caught up into the third heaven, he saw things there *“not lawful for a man to utter”* (2 Corinthians 12:4). Jesus said, “I have many things to tell you, but you’re not able to bear them.” (John 16:12) Daniel said, “Seal up the prophecy. It’s for the time at the end” (Daniel 9:24). There are just a lot of things we don’t know: What are we going to be like when we get to Heaven? What are we going to look like? What age will we be? What will we eat? You don’t know. Don’t even try to answer those questions. Friend, a four-year-old can ask questions nobody can answer except God. So don’t—don’t—try to explain everything that we’re going to be like in our resurrection body. I don’t know. We have hints; we have clues. There are some things we can’t be dogmatic about; but friend, there’s something we can be bull dogmatic about—and that is we’re going to be like Jesus, and that’s good enough for me. Now, *“it [does] not yet appear what we shall be [like]: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is”* (1 John 3:2).

#### **A. Christ Is Going to Appear**

Actually, there are three things that are mentioned here that we can certainly know. First of all, that Christ is going to appear—Jesus Christ is coming back to this Earth. Now, He didn’t say, *“If He should appear,”* but *“when He should appear”* (1 John 3:2). Christ is coming back to this Earth.

Now, it’s like a great drama—it’s like a great drama in two acts. In Act One—in Act One—there are five scenes. There’s the birth at Bethlehem—Scene One. Then, there’s the lad of Nazareth—Scene Two—and the preacher of Galilee. Scene Three—there is the preacher and the miracle worker. Scene Four—there’s the crucified Son of God. Scene Five—there’s the buried, risen, and ascended Christ, and then the curtain comes

down. That's the first act in five scenes. And now, we're waiting for the second act to begin. And, Christ is now standing in the wings, getting ready to step back on the stage of human history, only this is not a make-believe drama; it is real. Jesus went to Glory; He's coming back to glory. He appeared once; He is coming back to this earth. Literally, visibly, actually, Christ is coming again—He is coming again. Bank on it. It is true. Jesus is coming again. He will appear. That's one thing we know.

## **B. We Will See Christ as He Is**

Now, the second thing we know—that we will see Him as He is. That's what this verse says. Look at it: *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear...we shall see him”*—now, watch this. Not as He was, but—*“as he is”* (1 John 3:2). Now, as He was—that's when He was here in His humanity walking the dusty shores of Galilee. That's when He was here wearing a crown of thorns. But, we're going to see Him when He comes again, resplendent in His glory.

Now, I referred you to that prayer in John chapter 17. I sometimes just sit back and read, and read, and reread, and reread again John chapter 17 because it concerns you. Jesus Christ is praying for you, and this is what He prays in John chapter 17, verse 5: *“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with [you] before the world [began]”* (John 17:5). Before God hurled this planet out into space; before God flung out the sun, moon, and stars; before God scooped out the oceans, and heaped out the mountains, and dotted the hillsides with flowers; before God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, the Lord Jesus was there in the bosom of the Father, glorified. And now, He says, “Father, I'm getting ready to go back to that glory. I came out of the ivory palaces into this world of woe; but now, Father, it's done. Glorify Me, Father, with the glory that I had with You before the world began.”

Now, get ready for this—John 17, verse 24. Here's what Jesus prayed for Bob, for Adrian, for Jim, for David, for the choir, and for you: *“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory”*—*“that they may behold my glory”* (John 17:24). You know, ever so often we have a loved one that goes on to Heaven. One of our beloved deacons died a few days ago. You know what blesses me more than anything else about a loved one in Heaven? It's not streets of gold or gates of pearl—it is that they are beholding the glory of Jesus Christ. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine? Listen, what John says is what we do know is this: that He will appear and we will see Him as He is. Oh, that will be glory for me! You know, if Jesus was in the heart of Red China in a physical, literal body, I'd be making plans to get over there—I mean, I would. But oh, I'm going to see Him. Any moment my eyes may see Him—the Lord Jesus Christ.

### C. We Are Going to Be Like Him

And, you know, here's a third thing that we know. Number one: He's going to appear. Number two: We're going to see Him. And, number three: We're going to be like Him. Look again in verse 2: *"when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is"* (1 John 3:2). And, notice that he links these two—being like Him and seeing Him together. Did you know if you were to see Him right now, you would disintegrate? I mean, you couldn't bear it in your body right now without being transformed; you couldn't look upon Him.

I was meditating on this verse—1 Timothy chapter 6, verses 14 through 16. These may be some of my favorite verses. Paul was telling Timothy, *"That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable"*—now, watch this—"until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ"—he's talking about the same thing that John is talking about—*"Which in his times he [will] shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the [life] which no man can approach unto"*—now, just pause here just for a moment. Jesus dwells in such glory that you could not even begin to approach to it. *We have sent a man to the moon. Do you think we'll ever send one to the sun? No—no. Nobody can approach to the sun. I'm talking about the S-O-N.* Now—*"[the Lord Jesus dwells] in the light [that] no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen"* (1 Timothy 6:14–16). Now, put this together. I mean, we'll have to be like Him to see Him as He is. I mean, if we were not made like Him, our eyes could not stand the sight; but we are going to be like Him, and we're going to see Him as He is.

Now, you can ask me a lot of questions; but folks, I want to tell you three things, and you listen to me carefully: Jesus is gonna appear; we're going to see Him; and we're going to be like Him. That's the reason the Psalmist said, *"I shall be satisfied, when I awaken [in] thy likeness"* (Psalm 17:15). "Adrian, what's the resurrection body gonna be like? Adrian, what is Heaven gonna be like?" I can't tell you, but I'll tell you this much: you'll be satisfied; you will like it. *"I shall be satisfied, when I awaken [in] thy likeness"* (Psalm 17:15).

### III. The Christian's Duty

Now, we have talked about our dignity and what we are (sons of God). We have talked about our destiny—what we shall be (like Him). Now, let's get to the bottom line and talk about our duty—what we should be—what we should be. Now, look at this—verse 3: *"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure"* (1 John 3:3). Now, what does that mean to us today? You know, it's one thing to talk about our dignity and our destiny. Don't you think it's time we talked a little bit about our duty? Don't you think we ought to say, "What does this mean to me? What does this mean to

you?” *“Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure”* (1 John 3:3).

#### A. You Ought to Be Looking for His Coming

Let me mention some things concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus that ought to be real in your life. Number one: You ought to be looking for His coming. You know what the word *hope* means? The word *hope* in the Bible means “absolute certainty mingled with anticipation.” Sometimes my brother and I would get in a fight in the backseat of the car. We’d be out for a Sunday drive. My dad would say, “When you get home, I’m gonna give you boys a licking.” That was certainty, but there was no anticipation—not glad anticipation. You see, the, the coming of Jesus is a divine certainty mingled with I-can-hardly-wait-for-it-to-get-here. And, you and I ought to be looking for His coming.

#### B. You Ought to Be Living for His Coming

Now, not only should we be longing for it, but we ought to be living for His coming. Now, notice this again—verse 3: *“every man that hath this hope in him”*—does what?—*“[purifies] himself”* (1 John 3:3). Go back up to chapter 2 and verse 28: *“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming”* (1 John 2:28).

Folks, are you ready for Jesus to come today? I mean—I mean, really—is your heart pure, or is your heart headquarters for hate? Are you feeding a fever and nursing a grudge? Is there in your heart some vile habit? Is there in your cabinet some beverage that ought not to be there? Is there in your library some filth? Think about it. If you knew—if you absolutely knew, absolutely knew—that Jesus Christ were coming back this afternoon, would you make some changes? Would you make some changes? Then make them, because you don’t know when He’s coming. *“Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure”* (1 John 3:3). You’re to be longing for His coming. You are to be living for His coming. Second Corinthians 7:1: *“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”* (2 Corinthians 7:1). You know, it’s wonderful to be able to pray and say, “There’s nothing between my soul and the Savior.”

“Well,” you say, “Pastor Rogers, just so long as I get to Heaven, it’ll be all right. Even if I go second-class, that would satisfy me.” Well, it won’t satisfy God, and it won’t satisfy you. Do you know how I know I’m saved? Do you know why I want to live a holy life? Not because I am afraid of what God will do to me if I don’t. I think I can illustrate that. Some teenagers were out, and one of them suggested they do something they ought not to do. And, a godly girl in that crowd said, “No, I don’t want to do that.” And, one of them began to tease her and said, “Oh, you’re afraid your daddy will hurt you, aren’t

you?” She said, “No, I’m afraid I’d hurt my daddy”—“hurt my daddy.” That’s the difference—that’s the difference between law and love. *“Every man that hath this hope in him”* (1 John 3:3)—every man that says, “I am a blood brother of the Lord Jesus Christ”; every person, boy, girl, man, woman that says it and means it... Soon and very soon, I’m going to see the King. They want to be pure when the Lord Jesus comes.

### C. You Ought to Be Longing for His Coming

We are to be looking for His coming; we are to be living for His coming, and we ought to be longing for His coming. You know, when I was a youngster, I used to hear preachers preach about the Second Coming of Jesus, and I thought, “Oh, what rotten luck! I won’t even get to get married. I won’t get to do all those things I want to do. My life’s going to be cut short.” Friend, listen—the longer I live and the more I see, the more I understand that the best thing that could happen to any of us and all of us is for Jesus Christ to come right now—right now. Don’t you worry—you’re not going to get left out if Jesus comes right now. Don’t you worry about things coming—somehow that you missed out on something. It is all gain. *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain”* (Philippians 1:21). If I die now or if Jesus comes now, I am stepping out; I’m stepping up. And folks, I long for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

You know, a man who used to pastor this church was named Dr. Robert G. Lee. Some of you youngsters don’t know Dr. Lee but know of him. Some of the old-timers in the church were here when Dr. Lee was pastor. I just wonder, how many of you... Are there some who were members of the church when Dr. Lee was here? Look at that. All right, wonderful. But, Dr. Lee—oh, he’s just an incredible man, and he had a way of telling stories that were wonderful. And, Dr. Lee said that one day, when he was a boy on the farm and everybody else had gone to town, he was there on the front porch with his mother. And, he said his mother was doing some crocheting or knitting. Dr. Lee said, “I was a little boy. I was down on the floor. She was out on the porch of the old farm house.” Said, “I was down on the floor. I had my chin in my hands, my heels sticking up in the air. And, I asked my mother, ‘Mother, what was the happiest day of your life?’ I looked up at her worn hands as she was doing that work, and she said something I didn’t expect for her to say. I thought maybe she would say it was the time when my father—a tall man, six-feet-tall with dark eyes, expressed his love for her. But, she didn’t say that was the happiest day of her life. Then,” he said, “I thought it might have been that time out by the gate of that farm”—said—“it was such a poor farm, you could hardly raise an umbrella on it, much less a mortgage.” He said, “I thought maybe it was the time out there when he asked her to marry him. But, she didn’t mention that.”

He said, “I thought, ‘Well, maybe it was that time when in the little farmhouse there on the corner of that farm where they took their holy vows—vows that they kept for 50



years before he was taken on, but she didn't mention that.' She said, 'Son, I believe the happiest time of my life was this.' She said, 'You know, we lived back, when I was a little girl, in the days of the Civil War. And, all the men had gone off to war, and the women had to stay there and work on the fields. And, I saw my mother work out there alongside the other women in the fields. We had very little. We got our salt from the smokehouse floor. We made tea from sassafras. We made something like coffee from dried corn, and then the word came that your grandfather Bennett had been killed in the Civil War.'" Dr. Lee's mother said, "I watched my mother"—said, "She didn't seem to cry much in the day, but at nighttime when I was a little girl I could hear her in the next room as she was sobbing out her heart to God." She said, "You asked me about the happiest day of my life. I'll tell you about it. After we had learned that and heard that your grandfather had been killed in the war, my mother was sitting on the porch, very much like we are, and she was snapping beans. And, she saw a man coming down the road, and she said, 'I declare, Elizabeth, look at that man! He looks like your daddy—he looks like your father.' And, I said, 'Now Mother, don't be sad. You know Daddy is gone.'"

"But then, that man came and began to walk across a little patch of cotton, and she threw those beans in the air; and she said, 'Elizabeth, that's your daddy!' And, she ran across that field, and there he stood. He had an empty sleeve; he was missing an arm, and they embraced. And, he reached out with that other arm and pulled her in close. She said, 'I ran as fast as my little legs would carry me, hugged my daddy's knees, ran my hand up that empty sleeve and felt that funny little arm.'" And, she said, "Son, that was the happiest day of my life." Then, Dr. Lee said this: he said, "That day will pale into insignificance to the day when we see Him—when Jesus comes, and our eyes behold the King. And, the One who opened to us the doors of grace will open to us the doors of Glory. What a day that will be when our Savior comes!

Our dignity—our dignity: we're the sons and daughters of God. Our destiny: we're going to be like Jesus. Our duty: *"[he] that hath this hope in him [purifies] himself, even as he is pure"* (1 John 3:3).

## Conclusion

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. If you know that you're saved already, would you begin to pray for those round about you who might not be saved? Because, friends, you listen to me—those who are not yet saved are going to miss all of this. They don't understand this. The only way to be a son, a daughter, of God is to be born into His family. The Bible says in John 1:11 that *"[Jesus] came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many...received him"—"as many as received him"—"to them gave he [the] power to become the sons of God"—the daughters of God, the children of God—"even to them that believe on his name"* (John

1:11–12).

How many in this building would say, “Pastor Rogers, if Jesus Christ were to come today”—and friend, He might—“I’d be ready to meet Him”? Or, “If I would die today in an automobile accident on the way home from church, I know that I would go to be with Jesus”? How many can say that and mean it? If you can’t say that and mean it, let me just pray for you right now. Father, I pray that many today will say an everlasting “yes” to Christ. Open hearts; give understanding, Lord. Draw the lost to Jesus.

And, if you’re unsaved, would you pray a prayer like this—or if you’re not certain you’re saved, pray like this: “Dear God, my sin deserves judgment, but I need mercy. I’m lost. I need to be saved, and I want to be saved. I’m tired of just good intentions. I’m tired of just plain religion. I want to know You, God—I want to know You. I need to be saved. Jesus, You died for me. Thank You for dying for my sins. I now receive You by faith as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart; take control of my life. I turn it all over to You. I will follow You and live for You all the days of my life. Not in order to be saved, but because You’ve saved me, I will do it. Lord Jesus, thank You for saving me. I just receive it by faith, right now. And, Lord Jesus, give me the courage to make it public, not to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.



# Reasons for Righteousness

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: August 1, 1979**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 3:1–9**

*“Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.”*

1 JOHN 3:7

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Father’s Love for Us
- II. The Savior’s Liberation of Us
  - A. From the Penalty of Sin
  - B. From the Principle of Self
  - C. From the Power of Satan
- III. The Spirit’s Life Within Us
  - A. We Have a New Dynamic
  - B. We Have a New Desire
  - C. We Have a New Deterrent

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want us to study tonight in I John chapter 3, verses 1 through 9. That’s where we left off. Actually, you will remember that in our last Wednesday night study we dealt with 1 John chapter 3, verses 1 through 3. But I want us to reiterate those verses and add some more to them and look at it from just a little different perspective tonight. Tonight we’re speaking on this subject: “Reasons for Righteousness,” or from another title: “How to Behave the Gospel.”

Now it is one thing to believe the gospel, but it is another thing to behave the gospel. And what you believe really determines how you behave. And if a person says that he believes the gospel and he doesn’t behave the gospel, he doesn’t really believe the gospel.

We get our word *believe* from an old English word “*by live*.” And what a man believes, he lives by, and the rest is just pompous religious talk. And so, tonight I’m reading here in I John chapter 3, verse 1: “*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it*

*doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”*

Reasons for Righteousness. Now there are many, many counterfeit Christians in the world today. People who have their names on church rolls, who have never been born again. Baptized pagans who, while they profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, are not living righteous lives, and they are going to die and go to hell. The devil had just as soon send you to hell from the pew as he had the gutter. As a matter of fact, he'd rather send you to hell from the pew than the gutter; you are a much better advertisement for him. And if your religion has not changed your behavior, you have not been saved.

And here in the Scripture that I give you tonight, there are three reasons for righteousness—reasons why we ought to behave the gospel. And not only are they reasons for righteousness, but they are also the secret of our strength that causes us to live the way we profess. I want to give you three reasons why you ought to live a righteous life. Reason number one is because of the Father's love for you. Reason number two: because of the Savior's liberation of you. And reason number three is because of the Spirit's life within you. Those three reasons are reasons that John gives us right here.

## **I. The Father's Love for Us**

Now let's talk about the first one, and the first one is because of the Father's love for you, the Father's love for me. Notice how verse 1 begins. It begins with *“behold.”* *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.”* Now when John says, *“Behold,”* he means, “Would you look at that?” That is, this is such a wonderful love—it's such an amazing love—that when John sees it, he just says, “Behold such love, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.”

And in the light of that amazing love, John mentions three things that are the result of that love. First of all, what we are—in verse 1: *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”* God's love

makes me His son, and that's a wonderful thing. And so verse 1 speaks of what we are— that is, the Christian's dignity; we are sons of God.

And then verse 2 speaks of what we will be. *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”* God loves us so much that not only did He make us His sons, but furthermore, He's going to make us like the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so verse 1 speaks of our dignity: what we are. And verse 2 speaks of our destiny: what we shall be because of His love. And then verse 3, in the light of these other two things, speaks of our duty: what we should be. Look in verse 3, *“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”* And that's the first reason for righteousness, *“every man that hath this hope in him.”* What is the hope? That *“now are we the sons of God”*; one day we're going to be like the very Son of God. And it's all because of God's amazing love. And when a person knows this and understands this, he wants to live a pure life. Anybody who understands that he's a child of God and anybody who understands that one day he's going to be like the Lord Jesus Christ has a mighty motivation to live right.

You see, there's a difference between the sins of the unsaved and the sins of the saved. An unsaved man sins against his Creator, and that's bad enough. But you see, a child of God sins against love. He sins against his Father. The unsaved man sins against law. But the Christian sins against more than law; the Christian sins against God's love. That's the difference, really, between a slave and a son. A slave is under his master's law, and so when a slave sins, he fears his master's lash. But when a son sins, he doesn't fear his father's lash nearly so much as he fears his father's displeasure.

We need to understand that a mighty motivation for living right is not what God is going to do to us if we don't do it; it's just that God's love constrains us to do it.

*Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

—ISAAC WATTS

Now I fear God, and I know that if I disobey Him, He's going to chastise me. And I know that if I live right that I'm building up reward in heaven. I know all of that. But folks, I want to be honest with you: The thing that causes me to want to live pure is God's love for me—God's love for me. *“Behold, what manner of love God hath bestowed upon me, and he that hath this hope in him purifyeth himself.”* I know that when I sin against God, the One who loves me so much, not only do I break God's law; I break God's heart. Have you ever thought about your sins as breaking God's heart? Have you ever thought about your sins as not just simply hurting you but hurting God? Have you ever thought

about that scripture in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 30, that says, *“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption”*?

Let me tell you about that word *grieve*. That word *grieve* is the love word. “Now what do you mean by that, Brother Rogers?” Well, you can only grieve someone who loves you.

Now my mother and daddy are here tonight, somewhere. I haven’t seen them, but I believe they are here if they found their way from my house here. And where are my folks? Lift your hands. Are they here somewhere? Are they skipping church tonight? Where are they? Oh, there they are down there. Okay, now my mom and dad are here tonight, and I’m sure that I have grieved them many times because they love me. Now my dad had an outboard motor, for example. And I’m sure his outboard motor vexed him many times, but it never grieved him. Only a son or someone that you love can grieve you. An automobile or a thing may vex you. But you see, when we sin against the Holy Spirit, when we sin against God, we grieve Him. Why do we grieve Him? Because He loves us so much. You can only grieve someone who loves you. And one mighty motivation for living right, one mighty motivation for doing right, is that God loves us so much! God loves us so much! When we sin against Him, we grieve Him. We sin against love, not against law. Although there is law there, the Christian primarily sins against love. *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”* And so reason number one for righteousness is just simply this—that God loves us so much, it is unthinkable—unthinkable—that a Christian would knowingly, deliberately, willfully sin against such love.

## **II. The Savior’s Liberation of Us**

All right, so reason number one for righteousness is because of the Father’s love for me. Reason number two is because of the Savior’s liberation of me. He has set me free. Continue to read here in verse 4: *“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he”—Jesus—“was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”*

Now these verses tell me that Jesus Christ has liberated me. He has liberated me from the penalty of sin. He has liberated me from the principle of self. And He has liberated me from the power of Satan. That’s what these verses tell me.

### A. From the Penalty of Sin

First of all, He has liberated me from the penalty of sin. Verses 4 and 5: *"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sin and in him is no sin."* The sinless One became sin for me that I might be removed from the penalty of sin. And Jesus Christ has liberated me—praise His holy name—from the penalty of sin.

Now John tells us that sin is the transgression of the law. Now what is that? Sin is breaking God's law. God says, "Thou shalt not." And man says, "I will so." God says, "Thou shalt." And man says, "I will not." And actually, sin is a clenched fist raised in the face of God. And therefore, sin is rebellion because sin is the transgression of the law. And law without penalty is only advice. And God is not giving advice when He gave His holy law. And sin is the transgression of the law. And all of us are guilty, for the Bible says, "All have sinned and have come short of the glory of God." And one-half of one sin is enough to damn us forever. But Jesus Christ became sin for us, and He liberated us. He set us free from the penalty of sin.

### B. From the Principle of Self

But not only have I been liberated from the penalty of sin; I have also—by that same Savior who took away the penalty—been liberated from the principle of self, which is the practice of sin. Notice in verse 6: *"Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not."* You see, here's the wonderful thing, friend: Not only did Jesus remove the penalty of sin, but Jesus removed that principle of self that used to be on the throne of my life. And He allows me now to abide in Him that He might abide in me. I don't have that old self nature that caused me to sin. Now, the self nature is there, but I don't have to yield to it anymore, and I'll say more about that later. But I have been set free from that principle of self. I used to have a rebellious nature, and it's still there. But the Lord Jesus is overcoming it now. And we all, by nature, have a rebellious nature. Sometimes we openly rebel and sometimes we secretly rebel.

I read about a little boy who misbehaved, and his mother thought of a unique punishment. She thought she'd put him in the clothes closet and lock the door behind him and make him stay in there in the dark for awhile. And maybe that would be a fitting punishment. And after a while, she got concerned because he was so quiet in there. She said, "What are you doing in there?" He said, "Well, I have spit on your dress, and I have spit on your shoes, and I've spit on your coat. And I'm waiting on more spit."

Now there are people like that who just have a rebellious nature. You put them in jail, but they still have a rebellious nature. Now the Lord, not only does He remove that penalty of sin—and I thank God for that, in verses 4 and 5—but He also removes the principle of self, that old rebellious self that's in us.

### C. From the Power of Satan

And then, thirdly, not only have I been liberated from the penalty of sin and the principle of self, but I have been delivered and liberated from the power of Satan. Look in verses 7 and 8: *“Little children, let no man deceive you:”—that is, don’t fool yourself—“he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.”* Now don’t tell me you belong to Jesus if you don’t live like Jesus. If you live like the devil, it’s because you belong to the devil.

You know, you see some men sitting around talking, and there will be several dogs sitting on the ground while these men are in a conversation. And then the men get up and they walk off. And one dog will get up and follow that man. Another man will get up and walk off, and the other dog will get up and follow him. Now who do those dogs follow? Well, they follow their master. They follow their master. You tell me who you are following, and I’ll show you who your master is. I mean, look folks: *“He that committeth sin is of the devil.”* If you are following Satan and going after Satan, it is because you are of the devil. Now I don’t care whose church you are a member of. And John says, “Quit kidding yourself! You’re living like the devil; it’s because you are of the devil. Don’t tell me you are saved,” John says, “if you live that way.” You see, Jesus Christ didn’t come to save us in our sins; He came to save us from our sins. He liberated us from the penalty of sin, from the principle of self, and from the power of Satan. And therefore, praise God, I don’t have to sin, because Jesus Christ has set me free.

Now the Bible goes on to say here that He was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. Look at the end of verse 8: *“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”* Now the word *destroy* does not mean “annihilate”; the devil certainly is not annihilated. But the word here, *destroy*, is a Greek word which means “to render inoperative.” It means “to put out of commission; to make ineffective”—to bind the power of Satan! And Satan has no power over the child of God anymore, except what power the child of God allows him to have.

Now the unsaved man is still like a puppet on a string. And the unsaved man says, “Well, I’m free to do as I want.” He talks about freedom. That’s true; he is free to do as he wants. He’s just not free to do as he ought. He always does what he wants, but he never wants to do what he ought. And if he ever did, he couldn’t until he has the power of the Holy Spirit within him.

## III. The Spirit’s Life Within Us

So that’s the second reason that a Christian ought to live a righteous life. The first reason is the Father’s love for him. The second reason is the Savior’s liberation of him. The third reason, though, is the Spirit’s life within him. Look in verse 9 now: *“Whosoever*

*is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."*

Now Christians are not just nice characters; Christians are new creatures. And because we are new creatures, we have three new things, and these verses tell us about them. Number one: We have a new dynamic. Number two: We have a new desire. And number three: We have a new deterrent to keep us from sinning. Let's see what verse 9 says.

#### **A. We Have a New Dynamic**

First of all, we have a new dynamic. We are born again. We are born of God. Now we call the new birth "regeneration." *Re* means "again"; *generate* means "to be born." We are regenerated. We are born again. And therefore, because of our new birth, we can be set free from that old life because we have a new life within us. Notice how verse 9 begins with a new birth: "*Whosoever is born of God.*" Notice how it ends with a new birth: "*because he is born of God.*" And that new birth is a dynamic within us. A Christian is not somebody who just has a set of standards out there that he is trying to keep outwardly, but he has a power within him. He has been born again. You see, I had a physical birth and that gave me only physical life. And in order for me to have spiritual life, I needed another birth. John 3, verse 6 says, "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*" And then Jesus said, "*Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*" But if I have been born again and I have, friend, that gives me a dynamic to live righteously.

Now my parents, I'll refer to them again. They are here tonight, and because of them, I'm here. It's very obvious. I like the fellow who was getting his diploma, said, "First of all, I want to thank my mother and my father, for without them it wouldn't be possible." And it's so true. We're here because of our mothers and our fathers.

Well, spiritually we have a mother, and spiritually we have a father. Our spiritual parents are the Word of God and the Spirit of God. And when the Word of God and the Spirit of God come together, there is a new birth. That's the reason the Bible says in I Peter chapter 1 and verse 23 that we are "*born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God.*" Now this same scripture here in I John speaks of that same seed that abides in us. Now he's talking here about the life of God that's called a seed that is within us. You see, we are the seed or the offspring of our parents, and spiritually, the nature of God abides in us. And there is a new nature now in me; it's called the seed of God. Look: "*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him.*"

There is something supernatural that took place in me when I was saved: I was born again. It took place in you, and that seed is there, and it gives you a new nature. Now, therefore, I have two natures. There is the first birth and I have that old Adamic nature



that came from my first birth. And then I had a second birth, and I have that new nature that came from that new birth. There is that old seed, and there is that new seed.

Now I need to nurture the new nature. Just as I take care of the physical body that I received from my first birth, I need to nurture the nature that I received from my second birth. My physical body needs food, and so my new nature needs food. And the food, of course, is the Word of God. *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”* (1 Peter 2:2)

*These hath God married and no man shall part:  
Dust on the Bible and drought in the heart.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Not only does my new nature need food; my new nature needs cleanliness. I know that if you don't keep your body clean, then you are just open to invasion from germs. First of all, that germ comes in. And after that germ comes in, then that infection comes in. And after that infection comes in, that debilitation comes in. And after that debilitation comes in, collapse comes in. And I've seen it happen to so many Christians who do not keep themselves spiritually clean, and cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh. First of all, that germ of uncleanness comes in. And then that spiritual infection comes in, and then that spiritual debilitation comes in, and then that collapse comes in.

You see, as my body needs food, my spirit needs food. As my body needs to be clean physically, so my spirit needs to be clean. And as my body needs exercise, so does my spirit need exercise. Now if I feed my body and don't exercise it, I'll become flabby. But if I exercise and don't feed myself, I'll die. But I am to feed myself and exercise myself. Now you have a new nature, and listen: Your new nature—that new birth—needs to be fed, it needs to be cleansed, it needs to be exercised that we might grow. But let me just say that one reason, friend, that I am to live righteously is because the Savior liberated me, and now the Spirit lives within me to give me a new dynamic.

Now I want to say one other thing about this new nature. I don't want you to equate the old nature with the body. Don't ever get the idea that the body is evil. The body is not evil; the body is neutral. And in my body are two natures: There's that old nature and there's that new nature. And to whichever nature I yield myself is the determining factor as to whether or not I'm going to have victory or not have victory. The body itself is not evil.

## B. **We Have a New Desire**

All right now, not only is there a new dynamic—we're talking now about the life of the Spirit within us. The life of the Spirit within us gives us a new dynamic, which is the new birth. And because of that new dynamic, I have a new desire. Look again, if you will, please, at verse 9. The Bible says, *“Whosoever is born of God”*—that's the new

dynamic—*“doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him.”* That’s the new desire. Now the seed is that part of you that is the nature of God.

And what is the nature of God? The nature of God is that He doesn’t want to sin. Now folks, you want to find out whether you are saved or not? All right, come up close. I’ll just tell you. We’ll take a little test. Do you want to sin? If you do, you’re not saved. *Pfft! Pfft!* That’s it. You want to sin? You’re not saved.

Now you say, “Wait a minute; that’s pretty tough.” No, listen, friend: I had sooner eat dirt than willingly sin. You know, people say, “This once-saved-always-saved business,” they say, “man, if I believed that once saved, always saved; I’d get saved, and then I’d sin all I want to.” Well, friend, I sin all I want to. I don’t want to. There are times I sin all right. There are times because of that old nature, and because sometimes I don’t abide in the Lord Jesus Christ, and because I don’t pray as I ought, read my Bible as I ought, and because of all of these proclivities that are in me—there are times; yes, there are times when I sin. Of course! I tell you that nothing would make me happier than to know I would never sin again. Nothing! If there were just some way tonight that I could sign a contract and just put my name on it and say, “No more sin for Adrian Rogers. It’s fixed; it’s settled for eternity”; I’d sign it tonight without thinking *that* much. Don’t tell me—don’t tell me that you’re saved if you say, “Well, I’d get saved and sin all I want to.” You need to get your wanter fixed, or you need a brand-new one. You need to be born again!

Listen. Friend, I have a new dynamic: That’s the new birth. And because I have a new dynamic, I have a new desire. God’s seed, God’s nature, is in me. And God’s nature is a nature that hates and abhors sin. And if you still have that old desire to sin—I’m not talking about the cravings of your fleshly appetite; I’m not talking about the fact that you cannot be tempted. Jesus was tempted *“in all points like as we are, yet without sin.”* (Hebrews 4:15) But I’m just talking about this fact that, if there is within you a deep-seated desire to sin, you don’t have the nature of God within you. All right, I’m not talking now about temptation, but I’m talking about a basic planned desire to sin is not of the Father.

### C. **We Have a New Deterrent**

Now, let me give you a third thing here, and we are still talking about the spiritual life within us. The third reason for righteousness is that I have a new deterrent. I want you to notice again in verse 9: *“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; [because] his seed remaineth in him:”—*that’s the desire, and here’s the deterrent—*“and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”*

Now right away your mind is just really going just like *this*. You are saying, “Now, wait a minute. You said, Brother Rogers, that you sin, and that it grieves you when you do. And here the Bible says that if a man is born of God, he cannot sin!” Well, does the

Bible teach sinless perfection? It does not! And does this verse teach sinless perfection? It does not! And in a moment, I'll tell you what this verse does teach you.

But let me tell you why we do not believe in sinless perfection. Number one: Sinless perfection is contrary to what we know about the human experience. If you read the Bible, you read in the Bible about the sins of the saints, won't you? And I mean the saintliest of the saints. You'll read some flaws; you'll read some problems, some sin in their life. And if you look around you, you'll see the sins of the saints. And furthermore, if you go home and look in the mirror, you'll know what I am talking about.

I heard about one man who was standing up in a testimonial meeting in one of these churches where they give lip service to the doctrine of sinless perfection. And he was testifying about how he'd reached that state of sinless perfection. And it sounded pretty good until a little old lady stood up in the back and lifted her hand and said, "Remember, John, I'm here." It was his wife, and he sat down and shut up.

Now, there's a difference in character and reputation. Reputation is what others think about us. Character is what our wife knows about us. And here was a man who sat down in a hurry.

No, we don't believe in the doctrine of sinless perfection because, number one: It is contrary to what we know about human nature. Number two: It is contrary to what we know about our own hearts. Many of us know that we're saved, and we know that we know that we're saved. But we know that we're not sinlessly perfect. Number three: It's contrary to the plain statement of the Scriptures. Look, if you will, please, in I John 1, beginning in verse 8. Now John is no fool, and he's not going to write something contradictory in the same book. And he says in verse 8 of I John 1: *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."* So it's contrary to human experience, it's contrary to what we know about our own hearts, and it's contrary to this plain statement in the Word of God.

So what does this passage mean here? And we're talking about a new deterrent that we get when we're saved. What does it mean when it says in verse 9: *"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin"*? Well, we have to learn a little bit here about the Greek tenses. And this is in the perfect tense, and it literally means that if a person is born of God he cannot habitually practice sin. He cannot make a practice of sin. Sin cannot be his way of life. The New American Standard translates it this way: "He does not practice sin." The Living Bible says, "He does not make a practice of sin." That is, it's not his way of life; it is not his nature. He does not live that way. He does not settle down in sin. It does not mean that it is impossible for him to slip into sin, or else I John 1:8–10 would be contradictory with this verse. And that's the same in verse 6. Verse 6 is

the same thing: *“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.”* It literally says, “Whosoever abideth in him doth not make a practice of sin.”

## Conclusion

Now here are three mighty motivations for righteousness. Here are three reasons for righteousness. Number one: the Father’s love for us. *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.”* Can you sin against that kind of love? If you can, I don’t think you even understand that love. Number two: the Savior’s liberation of us. Jesus liberated us from the penalty of sin, from the principle of self, and from the power of Satan. So therefore, I don’t have to be under bondage to these things anymore. And the third reason for righteousness is the Spirit’s life within me. And the Spirit’s life within me gives me a new dynamic, which is the new birth. It gives me, dear friend, a new desire, which is the nature of God in me. And it gives me a new deterrent; I cannot habitually practice sin, because it is just contrary to everything that is within me. And if you have just made peace with your sin, and if you’re just living high, wide, and handsome and openly in sin; you’d better check up on this thing that you call salvation.

Now we’re going to continue our study in I John next week. And as we continue our study, we’re going to see more and more about the assurance of salvation. The theme of this book that we’re studying tonight is blessed assurance. And one way that I can have that blessed assurance that I’m a child of God is that I know—I know—that God is delivering me day by day from sin. And I know that God is causing me day to day to live righteously. Oh, I haven’t attained; I’m not already perfect. But I know that something has happened in my life. Has that happened in your life? Have you been saved? Has there been a time in your life when you knowingly, consciously, willfully invited Jesus Christ into your heart? Has God forgiven your sins? Does God’s Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God? (Romans 8:16) And are you now living as a child of God? Are you behaving the gospel that you say that you are believing? Are you? If so, you can have that blessed assurance that Jesus is yours.

I want to bow our heads in prayer. Every head bowed; every eye closed. If you’ve not yet received Jesus Christ as your Lord and as your Savior, tonight would be a wonderful night for you to do so. And right now, Jesus wants to come into your heart. He’s so close to you. He’s closer to you than that person sitting next to you here tonight. He’s knocking at the door of your life. And He is saying, *“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.”* (Revelation 3:20)

He’s knocking tonight and He wants to come in. Why don’t you pray a prayer like this and ask Him to come in? Pray something like this: Lord Jesus, I need you. Lord Jesus, I want you. I open the door of my heart. I receive you right now as my Lord and as my

Savior. Forgive my sins; cleanse me. Save me. Thank you for doing it, Jesus. I don't deserve it; I just receive it by faith like a little child. And that settles it, Lord. Praise your holy name. Now help me, Jesus, not to be ashamed of you. Help me, Lord Jesus, to confess you before men because you died for me. In your name, I pray.

# Real Salvation

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 06, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 John 3:4–9

*“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”*

1 JOHN 3:9

## Outline

### Introduction

- I. The Rebellion That Proves Our Sinfulness
- II. The Righteousness That Proclaims Our Sonship
- III. The Redemption That Provides Our Salvation
  - A. We Are Redeemed from the Penalty of Sin
  - B. We Are Redeemed from the Power of Satan
  - C. We Are Redeemed from the Principle of Self
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    - 3. I Have a New Deterrent

### Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and find 1 John chapter 3 as we’re continuing our study, “The Sweetest Fellowship This Side of Heaven.” And, this morning, I want to speak with you on the subject of real salvation—real salvation. You know, the devil’s a great counterfeiter, and he’d just as soon send you to Hell from the pew as from the gutter. Matter of fact, I think he’d rather have you to have a form of religion but not to have genuine and real salvation, and I believe the curse of our twentieth century is that we have many churches that are filled with baptized pagans—a full church of empty people, people who’ve never really been saved. Oh, they have culture, but they don’t have Calvary. They have ritual, but they don’t have reality. They have form, but they don’t have force. They have religion, but they don’t have righteousness. Now, that’s what we’re going to be talking about today—is real salvation. And, it is a warning—a warning—to everyone in this building, lest you be deceived and miss the whole thing.

Now, beginning here in chapter 3, we read where we left off last week in verse 4: *“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he”—that is, “Jesus”—“was manifested to take away our sins!*

*and in him*”—that is, “in Jesus”—“*is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you*”—now, just underscore that—“*let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he*”—Jesus—“*is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God*” (1 John 3:4–9). Now, I say that many people are deceived because they have a gross misunderstanding of what true salvation is. We’re going to take this passage of scripture and break it up in three equal divisions today.

## **I. The Rebellion That Proves Our Sinfulness**

And, we’re going to see, first of all, the rebellion—the rebellion that proves our sinfulness. Sometimes we, you know, we sit in churches, well-dressed with a benign smile on our face. But, God looks down into our hearts, and God sees rebellion that is there.

Now look, if you will, in God’s Word in verse 5. Look at it—verse 4, rather: “[*And*] *whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law*” (1 John 3:4). Now, there are many definitions of sin in the Bible. This is perhaps the clearest and the best: “*Whosoever committeth sin [transgresses]...the law*” (1 John 3:4). Sin is breaking God’s law. Now, the Bible says in Romans 14, verse 23: “*whatsoever is not of faith is sin*” (Romans 14:23). That’s a good definition of sin. The Bible says in James 4, verse 17: “*Therefore to him [who] knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin*” (James 4:17). And then, in 1 John chapter 5 and verse 17: “*All unrighteousness is sin*” (1 John 5:17). Those are definitions of sin, but this one is the clearest and the most concise: sin is the transgression of the law. Let me just put it another way: sin is lawlessness. That’s what sin is.

You see, God made everything. God created the whole universe, and God built into this universe laws—physical laws and moral laws. And, the whole universe works according to the fixed laws of God. Why did God give law? Because He wanted order. We use the term today—what? “Law and order”—because without law there is no order; and without law, rather than having a cosmos, you have chaos. And so, God made everything. God made the stars to move in their orbits. God made the tides to ebb and flow. God made your body to work according to certain principles. These are built into nature, and they’re built into the moral system of things. Materially and morally, there are laws.

Now, often we talk about the laws of nature. There are no laws of nature; there are God’s laws that nature obeys. Do you understand that? You know, we have a



generation of people today talking about “Mother Earth.” What we need to talk about is Father God. Now, no longer we have Easter; we have Earth Day, so we can go out and worship dirt. Listen, the whole universe—the whole universe—works according to law. There’s the law of gravity. You get up in a two-story building and you step out the window—you’re not going to break the law of gravity; you’re going to demonstrate it. Isn’t that right? You’re going to be broken on it. Now, you may think you’re doing well for a while. You pass each window—you say, “It’s okay so far. It’s okay so far. It’s okay so far. It’s okay so far.” But friend, there is in God’s laws, laws for those who transgress God’s laws. And so, in the physical universe, there are laws. You don’t break the law of gravity; you’re broken on it.

And, in the moral universe, there are laws. We have the Ten Commandments. You don’t really break the Ten Commandments; you’re broken on the Ten Commandments. When you transgress God’s Ten Commandments, then you’re a sinner. Sin is what? It makes you an outlaw. Sin is the transgression of the law. You say, “Well, why did God give us these old laws? It’d be a whole lot better if we didn’t have all these laws. God is some cruel vengeful deity up there in Heaven making all those rules to make us squirm like a worm in hot ashes to keep them.” No! No, the laws are for your welfare. If we didn’t have the law of gravity here, we’d have to pull you down off the ceiling. And, morally, law is for your welfare. *Every time God says, “Thou shalt not,” He’s saying, “Don’t hurt yourself.” Every time God says, “Thou shalt,” God is saying, “Help yourself to happiness.”* God doesn’t need anything; He has everything. God made these laws for us. But, sin is the transgression of the law. And, when we transgress, we break God’s law and we break God’s heart because God loves us.

Now, there is a lawless spirit in all of us. Now, sometimes we can hide that lawless spirit. There are some people who, you know, they are just outwardly...they are rebels. We look at these people, and they have open defiance. And, you know, crime, and rape, and murder, and hatred, and violence—we call those kinds of people outlaws, but all of us are outlaws, because the Bible says, “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). And, the Bible says, “*All have sinned*” (Romans 3:23), so that means all of us have transgressed God’s laws. There’s not a person here who would say, “I’ve never broken God’s Ten Commandments.” Now, sometimes we are very smug and we are very sophisticated in the way that we live, and we have sins of the spirit; but they’re just as bad—they’re just as bad in God’s sight. They may not have the same repercussions, but sin is sin. Sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). Now, don’t tell me about all the laws that you haven’t broken. We’re going to talk about the ones that you have broken.

Now, we’ve tried to do everything about this lawlessness and this rebellion that is in the world. We tried education. Do you think that you’re going to change men’s hearts by

education? Nazi Germany was educated. Somebody said, “You can take an ignorant man—he’ll steal a watermelon off a boxcar. Give him an education—he’ll steal the railroad.” He becomes a clever devil. Education is not the answer. We tried psychology, and we think that perhaps we can train people or analyze them, but we still have a flood of lawlessness. We’ve tried legislature. We’ve tried the police force. We’ve tried prisons. Prisons today have just become a swamp of discontent and hatred, where the mosquitoes’ crime breed all the more. And, when we let people out of prison, they go right back to their crime, because the problem—the problem—is in the heart. You can restrain a man outwardly, but he’s still a rebel in his heart.

A mother had a son who was disobeying, and so she made the son go in the closet—stayed in the closet for a while. She thought that would be good punishment, so she put him in the closet and shut the closet door. It was real quiet in there for a long time. She got a little concerned. She said, “Johnny, what are you doing in there?” He said, “I’ve spit on your shoes. I’ve spit on your dress. I’ve spit on your coat, and I’m waiting for more spit.” Lawlessness is in the heart. And, what we need to do is to take the policeman off the street corner and put the policeman in the heart.

So, the very first thing I want you to see is the rebellion that proves our sinfulness. Verse 4: “*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law*” (1 John 3:4). Now, you may think—you may think—that this transgression is some innocent little peccadillo, and you may think, “Well, I haven’t sinned so much.” Let me ask you a question: How many of you have ever taken anything ever that didn’t belong to you, whether it was a nickel off your mother’s dresser, a toy out of your neighbor’s yard, you stole an answer in school when you cheated, looked on somebody else’s paper? Now, whether you’ve robbed a bank... How many of you have ever taken something that didn’t belong to you? Let me see your hand. Would you lift your hand? Let me look good. Take it down.

Now, I want to ask you another question: How many of you have ever told a lie—a lie—at least one time? I don’t care whether it was a white lie—white lie—or Technicolor—makes no difference. How many of you have ever, ever, one time, told a lie? Let me see your hands. All right, now, Brother Sorrell, we have a congregation today of liars and thieves. Now, now, that’s funny. You know, that’s funny. And, you know why that’s funny? Because we can all go, “Psssst! A nickel—told a fib.” You see, what we don’t realize is that what we do is not the problem. It is what we are that is the problem. A man is not a liar because he tells lies; he tells lies because he’s a liar. A man is not a thief because he steals; he steals because he’s a thief. The problem is in the human heart! Now, we may be very sophisticated—very smug about it. But, I want to tell you, my precious friend, if you only knew the sin that lurks in the human heart. The Bible says, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*”

(Jeremiah 17:9)—yo urs, madam; yours, sir. “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). And so, first of all, you see the rebellion that proves our sinfulness.

## II. The Righteousness That Proclaims Our Sonship

Number two: I want you to see, in contrast, the righteousness that proclaims our sonship. Do you remember last week the Bible said, “*Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be like*” (1 John 3:2)? Now, this passage follows that.

Now, look at the righteousness that proclaims our sonship: “*And [we] know that he*”—Jesus—“*was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not*” (1 John 3:5–6). Now, if we’re in Christ—if we’re saved—the Bible says we are not going to sin. That’s what God’s Word says. Now, we have a lot of people who say they’re saved—we have a lot of people who say they’re on the way to Heaven—but there’s been no change in their life—none at all. That’s the reason I call them *baptized pagans*. There’s no change. Listen to me—the Bible says, “*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away...all things are become new*” (2 Corinthians 5:17). If your religion has not changed your life, you better change your religion. You do not have the Bible kind. Now, we have today sort of an easy believism, where people say, “Oh, do you believe in Jesus?” “Yes.” “Do you believe He died for your sins?” “Yes.” “Well, then you’re saved.” No, you’re not. “*The devils also believe, and tremble*” (James 2:19). You are saved when you bow the knee to Jesus Christ, when you make Jesus Christ the Lord of your life. Yes, that’s an act of faith; but friend, it is a change. And again, if the religion has not changed your life, you don’t have the Bible kind.

Now, I want to be very clear here. You’re not saved by reforming your life. Our Lord never tells us to clean up and, therefore, He’ll save us. That’s backward. We come to Jesus just as we are. But friend, Jesus did not come to save us in our sin; He came to save us from our sin—He came to save us from our sin. Look, if you will, in verse 5: “*And [you] know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not*” (1 John 3:5–6). What he’s saying is that if we belong to Him, we’re going to be like Him. Look, if you will, in verse 7: “*Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous*” (1 John 3:7). Now, that’s the righteousness that proclaims our salvation. If you’re not righteous, you’re not saved. You see, the very word *Christian*... You know what the word *Christian* means? It means “Christ-like.” And, in Christ there’s no sin. Now, you can’t be Christ-like and live a life of sin.

Now look, if you will, in verse 6, and let’s just slow down here: “*Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not*” (1 John 3:6). Now, look at the word *abide*. The word *abide* means “to

be at home with, to dwell with.” If I were to say, “Come abide in my house,” that would be, “Live in my house. Dwell with me. Be at home right here.” It speaks of union and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the reason that many people are still living in sin—their names are on church rolls—is that they have met creeds but they’ve not met Christ. They’ve met codes, but they’ve not met Christ. They’ve met causes, but they’ve not met Christ. They have met churches, but they’ve not met Christ. When we abide in Him, it says we “*sinneth not*” (1 John 3:6)—we sin not.

Now, that brings a real problem, because all of us know that we, as Christians, fail. Look in verse 6 now, and I want you to pay a lot of attention with me now: “*Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not*” (1 John 3:6). Now, this is not talking about sinless perfection. There’s nobody sinlessly perfect. If you study the Bible and you look at the lives of the saints, you’re going to find out that they sin. You’re going to find out, for example, that Abraham lied about his wife, that Moses lost his temper, that Peter denied the Lord, that David was unfaithful; or, you’re going to find out that the saints in the Old Testament and the New Testament...the Bible shows their faults and their failures. And yet, this passage of scripture says that if we abide in Him, we will not sin (1 John 3:6).

Now, I don’t want to be too technical, but listen very carefully. This, in the Greek language, is the present continuous tense—the present tense. Now, what does it mean? It simply means this—that if you’re a Christian, you do not make sin your lifestyle. That’s what it means. One translation gives it this way: “When a man abides in him, he does not make sin his practice” (1 John 3:6). Another translation: “He does not have a sinning lifestyle” (1 John 3:6). The New American Standard says, “Whosoever is born of God does not practice sin” (1 John 3:6). All of these things mean the same thing. I looked it up last night in a number of translations. One says, “does not habitually sin”; another says, “He does not live in sin.” Now, it doesn’t mean that you cannot slip and fall; it does not mean that you cannot make some mistake. If it meant that, then John has lost his mind, because John, who wrote this, said in 1 John 1, verse 10: “*If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us*” (1 John 1:10). And then, he says, “If we abide in Him, we’ll not sin” (1 John 3:6). You know that John, whatever he is, is a reasonable person. Know that what he is saying is this—that when you give your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a change—a radical dramatic change. And now, because you’re saved, because you have the nature of God in you—and we’re going to see more about that later on—your life is changed; you do not habitually practice sin.

I think I can clear it up even more if you’ll look in 1 John 2, verse 1—and look at it for just a moment: “*My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not*”—all right, but watch the next verse—“*And if any man sin, we*”—believers—“*have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*” (1 John 2:1). That is, God’s desire for us is that

we don't sin. If we do slip and fall, Jesus Christ is there. *Advocate* is just a fancy word for "lawyer." We have someone who's going to plead our case before Heaven.

Now, look in chapter 2, verses 3 and 4—and this is really going to help us right now: *"And hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him"* (1 John 2:3–4). Do you think John had been in a testimony time sometime and heard somebody say, "I know Him," and John says, "Liar, I know your lifestyle. You don't know Him because you're not keeping His commandments"?

Now, the word *keep* is a navigational word; it's a word that sailors used. Back in that day, they didn't have radar. They did not have global positioning satellites. They did not have NORAD and all of these things that keep ships on track as they crossed the sea. They would steer by the stars. Those stars up there are fixed in Heaven, just like God's laws are fixed. And so, those sailors would put their eyes on the stars, and they would steer by the stars. And, you know what they called steering by the stars? "Keeping the stars"—"keeping the stars." That is, "This is the course that I'm keeping. I am sailing by those stars up there that are fixed in Heaven. That's what I sail by; that is my course." Now, the Bible says if we know Him, we are going to keep His commandments—we're going to steer by God's stars, as it were. We're going to keep His Word. That doesn't mean that a sailor could not get blown off course; that doesn't mean in a time of distraction, he might mis-turn the wheel. But, it does mean that he has a guide for his life; he has a direction that he's going; he has a fixed standard that he's living by.

Do you? Do you? You see, friend, God sent me here to tell you that if you do not care for God's commandments—that if you're living your willy-nilly life, doing as you please, not caring about God's commandments, not steering by God's stars; if you are habitually practicing sin—you don't know Him; you're not saved. And, John says, "Hey, don't let anybody deceive you." The problem is, today, folks, we have a lot of folks who have joined churches who have never met Jesus. I mean, they have never really been saved. And so, what he is saying is there is there is the rebellion that proves our sinfulness; there is the righteousness that proclaims our sonship—like Father, like son.

### **III. The Redemption That Provides Our Salvation**

Now, here's the third and final thing this morning. Are you following me? The rebellion that proves our sinfulness—the righteousness that proclaims our sonship. You say, "Okay, but Pastor, I don't have what it takes to live that way." Neither do I, so here's the third and most important thing—the salvation, the salvation...excuse me, the redemption that provides our salvation—the redemption that provides our salvation. When God tells us how we're to live, that doesn't mean that we can automatically do it apart from Him.

Now look, if you will here, in verses...well, let's begin in verse 5: *"And ye know that he was manifested"—Jesus—"to take away our sins; and in him is no sin"* (1 John 3:5). So, our Lord doesn't just give us these holy commandments and say, "Now, if you can live by these, you'll go to Heaven." What about the sins we've already committed? Jesus is *"manifested to take away our sins"* (1 John 3:5). In the Old Testament, I think about Leviticus 16. There was the ritual of the scapegoat. The high priest would take two goats. Both of those goats would represent us, and the high priest would lay his hand on the head of one of the goats and confess the sins of the people—that is, placing the sins of the people on the head of that goat. And then, that goat would be killed. That goat pictures the Lord Jesus Christ. Our sins were laid upon Him, and He died on the cross for our sins. Then, they would take another goat, and they would lead that goat called the *scapegoat* away into the wilderness, never to return again. That pictures Jesus taking away our sins into the grave of God's forgetfulness, never, never, never to be brought up against us again.

#### **A. We Are Redeemed from the Penalty of Sin**

So, listen—what is the salvation that... What is the redemption that provides our salvation? Number one: We are redeemed from the penalty of sin. Jesus took that away. That's what it says: *"he was manifested to take away our sins"* (1 John 3:5). When John the Baptist saw Him in John chapter 1, he said, *"Behold, the Lamb of God, [that] taketh away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29).

#### **B. We Are Redeemed from the Power of Satan**

But, not only—not only—did He redeem me from the penalty of my sin (I still need that), He also redeemed me from the power of Satan. Look again in verses 7 and 8: *"Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil"* (1 John 3:7–8). Now, that's the second reason He came. First reason He came—to take away our sins. But, the second reason that He came is to destroy the power of the devil. Now, I am redeemed from the penalty of sin; I am redeemed from the power of Satan.

Now, that's the reason John is saying if you're still living like the devil, it's because you belong to the devil—you belong to the devil. You know, sometimes we criticize Hollywood, and the liquor dealers, and all of these people—what they do. We say, "Oh, they sin." Of course they sin. They're sinners. That's what sinners are supposed to do. I mean, what else would they do? They're sinners! You see, *"he that committeth sin is of the devil"* (1 John 3:8). That's the problem in so many churches. We don't teach people how to be saved—that we get them in the church and the church, rather than being a



sheepfold, is to become a zoo. Everybody gets in, and nobody gets out. And, the pastor tries to teach Billy goats not to butt. No, they're sinners. *"He that committeth sin is of the devil"* (1 John 3:8). That's why they do it.

But now, notice what he says here. Look at it—look at it: *"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil"* (1 John 3:8). Now, the word *destroy* does not mean "annihilate" in the Greek language; it means "to make ineffective." We use the term today like "that just wiped me out." Jesus just wiped him out on the cross; he put him out of commission. On the cross, Jesus ruined Satan's kingdom. And, Satan has no power—no authority—over you. Before you were saved, you were Satan's slave; you were Satan's dirty plaything. You say, "Well, I was free." Yeah, you thought you were free. You were free to do what you wanted, but you were not free to do as you ought. You were Satan's slave, but Jesus has come to set you free. Jesus came to destroy the destroyer. And, because I have new life in the Lord Jesus Christ, I will never, ever face the penalty of my sin, because Jesus took my sin away. And, I can tell Satan to go sit on a tack. I don't have to listen to him; I don't have to obey him, because his power is broken and Jesus has destroyed the power of Satan. If you don't understand that, folks, you're not going to live a Christian life. I'm telling you, folks, that what we're talking about here is something real. Jesus came to destroy the destroyer. But, we're still not home yet.

### **C. We Are Redeemed from the Principle of Self**

Not only does Jesus deliver us—we're talking now about the redemption that provides our salvation—not only does He deliver us from the power of sin, not only does He deliver us, I mean, from the pollution—the awful power—of sin, He also delivers us from the power of Satan. And, He delivers us from the principle of self. Now look, if you will, in verse 9: *"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God"* (1 John 3:9). Now, this, folks, tells me that I am redeemed—I am redeemed—from the very principle of self. You see, if Jesus just dealt with my sin and that's all, I've still got me to deal with. I'm my own worst enemy, but Jesus has redeemed me from the penalty of sin. Jesus has redeemed me from the power of Satan, and Jesus has redeemed me from the principle of self. Not only did He die for my sins, He died for me—what I am. And, look at it again: *"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God"* (1 John 3:9).

#### **1. I Have a New Dynamic**

Now, we're almost finished. But now, listen to me carefully: when you get saved—and we're talking now about the principle of self—number one, you get a new dynamic.



Write that down—“a new dynamic.” You see, he calls this “born again.” When I was born the first time, I had physical life. When I receive Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord, I received spiritual life. Remember what Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3, verse 6: *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”* (John 3:6). Everybody’s had a fleshly birth. Not everybody’s had a spiritual birth.

Now, look again in verse 9: *“Whosoever is born of God”* (1 John 3:9). Now, how are you born of God? Well, I was born of Rose and Arden, because those were my physical parents. What are my spiritual parents? The Word of God and the Spirit of God—the Word of God and the Spirit of God—in the womb of grace have made me a new person. You see, the Bible says, *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed”—sperm—“but of incorruptible, by the word of God”* (1 Peter 1:23). You see, the Bible is my spiritual father—the Word of God. And, you can’t separate the God of that Word from the Word of that God; and so, I’m born there. But also, *“it is the spirit that [quickens]”* (John 6:63) and gives life. *“That which is born of the Spirit is spirit”* (John 3:6). So, you take the Word of God and the Spirit of God and there is a conception in the womb of grace, and you become a new person. And, when you become a new person, then, dear friend, you have a new life—you have a new dynamic. You’re not—you’re not—dependent upon just trying to do it. There’s a new life that has come into you. When, as a teen boy, I received Christ into my heart, I was born again—I received a new dynamic.

## **2. I Have a New Desire**

So, so listen—I have a new dynamic; and because I have a new dynamic—listen carefully—here’s the second thing: I have a new desire—I have a new desire. Look at this verse again in verse 9: *“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin”*—watch this now—*“for his seed remaineth in him”* (1 John 3:9). What does he mean—*“his seed remaineth in him”* (1 John 3:9)? Well, my father’s seed is in me. I’m a Rogers. If you were to see my father, see me, you’d recognize that I am a child of Arden Duncan Rogers, because his divine life is in me—I mean, his natural life is in me. And, when I got saved, I am born again—*“not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God”* (1 Peter 1:23). And, there is a divine life principle that is in me, and that principle gives me not only a new dynamic, but it gives me a new desire.

One translation I looked this up said, “God’s nature abides in him” (1 John 3:9). Well, what is God’s nature? God’s nature is holiness—God’s nature is holiness. That’s the reason he... Look in verse 7: *“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous”* (1 John 3:7). If Jesus Christ is in you through the new birth, not only are you going to have a dynamic, you’re going to have a new desire. You know, I believe in eternal security. I hope you do. I believe that once you get saved, you’re saved and you can never again be unsaved any more than I can be unborn. I’m born of God. When I was born physically, that was settled as once

and for all. When I was born again, that was settled as once and for all. I can't be unborn physically; I can't be unborn spiritually. But, once I came to the Lord Jesus Christ and I got saved, God's nature came into me and I now have the nature of God in me. And, that nature of God in me says, "I don't want to sin."

You know, some people say, "If I believed in eternal security, I'd get saved and I'd sin all I want to—I'd sin all I want to." I don't want to. If you want to, you need to get your want fixed. No, you need a new want. You need to be born again. When you get a new dynamic, you get a new desire. From the moment I gave my heart to Jesus Christ—and God is listening—there has been a desire in my heart to live for Him. If you don't have that desire, you'd better check up on this thing you call *salvation*. Don't let anybody deceive you. "*He that committeth sin is of the devil*" (1 John 3:8). That's the way the devil does it. He that is righteous has the Spirit of God in him; he is born of God. His seed remains in him. He has a new desire. Does that make sense to you?

### **3. I Have a New Deterrent**

Now, here's the third and final thing. Now, we're talking about... We're being delivered now not only from the penalty of sin and the power of Satan, but from the principle of self. I have a new dynamic—God's life is in me. I have a new desire—I want to be like Him because He's in me, and I'm in Him, and I'm abiding in Him. And, I have a new deterrent. That's the third thing; write that down—a new deterrent. It says here in this verse: "And he cannot sin, because he's born of God"—"he cannot sin, because he's born again" (1 John 3:9). Friend, if the God that I know lives in you—and again, this is present continuous tense—you cannot habitually live in sin. You just can't do it—you just can't do it.

I mean, friend, if Jesus Christ is in you, you cannot go on carelessly, thoughtlessly, continuously, practicing a lifestyle of sin. You just can't do it—not if you're born again. God will carry you to the woodshed and beat the daylights out of you. The Holy Spirit of God in you will tear you up. You will be under conviction, and He, the Holy Spirit of God, will live in you, and work in you, and dwell in you, because He is delivering you—not only from the penalty of sin and the power of Satan, but from the principle of self. You are born again. You have received a new nature; and with that new nature, you have a new dynamic, a new desire, and a new deterrent. You're living—you're living—for Jesus.

You know—listen to me now—I've told you before, the devil would just as soon send you to Hell from the pew as he had the gutter. I'm not asking if you're a member of Bellevue Baptist Church. Every now and then people say, "Pastor Rogers, did you know there are hypocrites in the church?" I say, "Oh?" I'm not asking, "Are you a Baptist?" You say, "Well, I'm a dyed-in-the-wool Baptist." You'd better be a washed-in-the-blood Baptist. I'm asking, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" There is the rebellion that proves our

sinfulness. Sin is the transgression of the law. There is the righteousness that proclaims our sonship. That's the way that we know that we've been saved. There is the redemption that provides our salvation. That redemption redeems us from the penalty of sin, from the power of Satan, and from the principle of self.

## Conclusion

Now, the Bible says, *"Let a man examine himself"* (1 Corinthians 11:28), whether he be of faith. Are you saved? If this were your last moment, do you absolutely know you'd go to Heaven? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed—no one stirring, no one looking around. Begin to pray for those who may be near you. There may be some precious soul here today that needs Christ, and I'm sure there are many. And, it's time, right now, for them to give their hearts to Jesus and to be saved. Pray for the person to your right, the person to your left. This is a very serious time in this service.

If you are not certain that you're saved, would you pray this prayer right now? "Dear God, I have broken Your law. I am a sinner, and my sin deserves judgment. But, I need mercy. I need to be redeemed from the penalty of my sin. I need to be redeemed from the power of Satan. I need to be redeemed from the principle of self. I need to be saved from me. Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for paying for my sin with Your blood on the cross. Thank You for dying for me. Thank You for taking my place. Now, by faith, I accept You. I receive You into my heart as my Lord and Savior. Take control of my life right now, and begin now to make me the person You want me to be; and help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

# The Legacy of Love

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 13, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 John 3:11–24

*“For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.”*

1 JOHN 3:11

## Outline

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn to 1 John chapter 3 and find verse 11. That’s where we left off last Sunday when we were together, talking about “The Sweetest Fellowship This Side of Heaven.” Look up here, and let me ask you a question: How would you like to have sweet assurance—to say, “I know that I know that I know that I’m Heaven-born and Heaven bound”? Furthermore, how would you like to have great, great boldness in your faith—to be able

to pray, to come to God and to pray with such confidence that you absolutely know that your prayer will be answered? And, let me ask you another question: How would you like to have sweet communion with the Lord—I mean, for the Lord not to be somebody that you read about or hear about, but for the Lord Jesus Christ to be in your life, a bright, burning, loving, gracious reality; to have assurance, to have confidence, to have communion with the Lord day by day? Wouldn't you like that? Well, there's a key to all of that. That's what we're going to talk about today, and that key is love.

Now, listen—love, today, is...well, it's sort of a word that we pass by. It's kind of shopworn. But, I want you to learn from the Word of God today the legacy of love. And, when you see it, you're going to realize what I said a few moments ago—that even if we were utterly selfish—utterly selfish—we would want to love. Of course, we can't be selfish and love, so that's really a contradiction. But, look at God's Word, and you'll understand what I'm talking about—beginning here in John chapter 3, verse 11: *“For this is the message that ye [have] heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and [doeth] all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things [which] are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us”* (1 John 3:11–24).

### **A. Murder**

Now, look up here. There are four levels of life. Let's start at the lowest level of life, and that is murder. Look, if you will, in verse 11 again: *“[And] this is the message that [we have] heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother”* (1 John 3:11–12). Adam had two sons. One

was a martyr, and one was a missionary. Cain slew Abel. By the way, the first murder was over religion. That's what the Bible says here: it was over religion. Cain hated Abel's religion, and Abel was a martyr for the faith. False religion is almost always murderous. It comes from the devil. Jesus said in John chapter 8 and verse 44 that Satan is a murderer (John 8:44). Jesus said he's a thief that comes to kill, and to steal, and to destroy (John 10:10). Who is whispering in Dr. Kevorkian's ears? Satan. Who is manipulating the street gangs? Satan. Who is enticing sometimes well-fed and well-paid doctors to snuff out life in the womb? Satan. That's the lowest level of life. That's of the devil. That's murder.

## B. Hatred

All right. Now, let's move on to the next level—not much higher. But, look, if you will now, in verses 13 and 14: *“Marvel not, my brethren, [that] the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. [And] whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer”* (1 John 3:13–15). Now, the next level—not murder, but hatred. You say, “Well, I've never killed anybody.” But, John says, “If you have hate in your heart, God wrote it down in His ledger as murder.” Jesus said the same thing in Matthew chapter 5, verses 21 through 22: Jesus said, “If you have anger with your brother, you have hatred in your heart” (Matthew 5:22). If your heart is headquarters for hate, you're on a mighty low level of life. Now, you might not have pulled the trigger; but in God's sight, God might see you as a murderer. *“[He that] hateth his brother is a murderer”* (1 John 3:15).

I remember hearing about a woman who went to the doctor. She'd been bitten by a rabid animal and said, “Yes, you do. You have rabies.” And, she got out a pen and a piece of paper and began to write. He said, “What are you doing—making out your will?” She said, “No, I'm making a list of people I'm going to bite.” There are people just like that—filled with hatred. God writes it down as murder. That's another level of life.

## C. Indifference

But then, there's another level—a little higher, but not a whole lot better. It's not murder or hatred, but it is indifference. Look in verse 17: *“But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother [hath] need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”* (1 John 3:17). Now, there are many who say, “Well, I'm not a murderer, and I don't hate people; I just go my way. I do my thing, and I let them do their thing.” And, you're indifferent. That, too, my friend, is not of God. Jesus gave a whole parable—the parable of the Good Samaritan—about those who passed the man by who had been beaten, and bruised, and bloodied, and left for dead. The world is full of the beater-uppers and the passer-uppers, but thank God there are some pickerA uppers, the Lord Jesus Christ.



## D. Love

Now, those are three levels of life, and we're not going to deal with those. But, I want to deal with the fourth level. That's the level of the child of God, those who are saved—and that is the level of love. Not murder, not hatred, not indifference, but love. Now, before we get into our text, I just want to take just a little moment and tell you of the great, great, immeasurable value of love. I looked up some scriptures; I want to share them with you. Get a pen and a piece of paper, and just jot these scriptures down. Let me tell you why love is so very, very important.

### 1. It Is the Greatest Virtue

Number one: It is absolutely the greatest virtue. Take your Bibles. Don't open them right now, but stay, if you will, in 1 John. But, just write down "1 Corinthians chapter 13, verses 1 and 2," and our Lord, here, is comparing all of the other virtues with love. For example, he says in verse 2: *"[If] I have...faith, so that I [can] remove mountains, and have not [love], I am nothing"* (1 Corinthians 13:2). What Paul is saying is, "What good is it if you can get rid of mountains and you can't get rid of malice?" Love is greater than faith—greater than mountain-moving faith. He says, *"[If] I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries...and have not [love]"* (1 Corinthians 13:1–2), I'm just like that gong on the Gong Show—I'm like sounding brass and tinkling cymbals" (1 Corinthians 13:1). It is the greatest virtue.

### 2. It Is the Greatest Commandment

Love is the greatest virtue; love is the greatest commandment. One time they asked the Lord Jesus, "Jesus, what is the greatest commandment?" (Matthew 22:36). Put this scripture down—Matthew chapter 22, verses 37 through 40: *"Jesus [saith] 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"—now, watch this—"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets"* (Matthew 22:37–40). What He says—you can take the Ten Commandments; you can take the Pentateuch; you can take Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations—you can take it all and just write down this: love God with all of your heart; love your neighbor as yourself. That's it. That's the sine qua non. That's it—the whole thing summed up. Love is the greatest virtue. Love is the greatest commandment. And, by the way, if love is the greatest commandment, what is the greatest sin? Not to love, because you've broken the greatest commandment—not to love God, not to love your brother.

### 3. It Is the Greatest Testimony

Listen, love is the greatest testimony. Jesus Christ said in John chapter 13 and verse 35: *"By this shall all men know that [you're] my disciples, if [you] love one...another"*



(John 13:35). You don't have to have a lapel pin; you don't have to have a bumper sticker.

A man out in California—true story—he was one of these guys, always on time—one of these guys does everything just right, businessman...woke up in the morning—he always liked to get on the freeway in California early so he would not be late—waked up, went out, and tried to start his car, and the battery was dead. He asked his wife, “Can I take your car?” She said, “Yes.” By this time, he'd missed the window of opportunity, and that freeway had become the world's longest parking lot. And, he's inching along; and then, he comes to a dead stop, and the man behind him toots the horn. Now, the guy's already late; he's already irritated, and the man behind him blows the horn. He just sits there and steams a little. And, after a while, the man behind him blows the horn again—true story. This executive, who's a member of a fine church in California, got so irritated. He just gritted his teeth. He said, “I don't know why that guy is blowing his horn at me. Doesn't he see I cannot move?” Then, the man tapped the horn the third time. This man, so angry—this executive, normally well-controlled—threw open the car door, went back to that man, tapped on the window. The man lowered the window. He put his finger in that man's face and said, “Listen, you—I don't want you to blow your horn at me one more time. I cannot move my car,” and he said some other things that weren't very nice to him. And, the man behind him said, “Sir, what is wrong with you?” He said, “What do you mean, ‘What's wrong with me?’” Said, “What's wrong with you?” He said, “No, what's wrong with you, sir?” He said, “Doesn't that bumper sticker mean what it says—‘honk if you love Jesus’?” “Oh,” he said. He said, “I do love Jesus. I am so sorry.” Now, you see, friend, what we need to do is *we need to take the saint off the dashboard and put him behind the steering wheel. Isn't that right?*

You see, love is—listen to me—love is the greatest virtue. Love is the greatest commandment. Love is the greatest testimony. “*By this shall all men know that [you're] my disciples, if [you] have love one [for] another*” (John 13:35).

#### **4. It Is the Greatest Motivation**

It is the greatest motivation. What motivates me? What motivates you? How can we get these people to put on this wonderful Christmas tree as they do? Just because they love music or because they love performing? No—no. You know what the Apostle Paul said? The Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 6: “*The love of Christ constraineth us*” (2 Corinthians 5:14). That's what keeps me going—the love of Jesus. It really is. I mean, do you know to be a soul-winner is not even loving souls? Jesus said to Peter, “*Lovest thou me?... Feed my sheep*” (John 21:16), not, “Do you love sheep, or do you love to feed them?” But, love—love—is the greatest motivation; it's the greatest thing in the world. And friend, now, we're going to come back to our text. All that was for free. It's not even in the text. All right, that's just to get you ready.

## 5. It Is the Greatest Investment You Will Ever Make

I want to say that love is also the greatest investment you'll ever make—the greatest investment you will ever make. And, what John is giving us here are three things that He gave, three things that we received, three benefits and blessings from love, when we learn to love. What is the legacy of love? Here they are. I'll give them to you in case you drop out before the sermon is over. The first one is a good conscience. The second one is a great confidence. And, the third is a gracious communion. That's the legacy of love.

### I. A Good Conscience

Now, first of all, let's look, if we can, at how we can have a good conscience when we love. Now, notice in verse 19: "And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things" (1 John 3:19). What causes your heart to condemn you? Lack of love. When you have malice in your heart—when you have hatred in your heart—you have a condemning heart. God has wired you that way. If you're saved—if you're born again—you cannot fail to love and have confidence.

Now, we're talking about the word *conscience*. You say, "I don't see the word *conscience* there." Well, in the Bible, the word *conscience* and the word *heart* are often used interchangeably. When he says, "*If our heart condemn us not*" (1 John 3:21), he's saying, "If our conscience does not condemn us." Now, when you have love in your heart, you're going to find a wonderful thing—that your conscience is going to be clear.

Now, your conscience is not an enemy; your conscience is a friend—is something unique put in you that God did not put into animals. Have you ever thought about it? Animals cannot blush, and animals can't laugh. Man has a conscience. Now, that conscience... A little boy said, when he was asked what conscience is, "That's the part of us that feels bad when everything else feels good." But, that's not really true. It's more than that. That may be the world's frivolous definition of a conscience, but that conscience is that part of you that God has put in you. It is an ability to concentrate our actions and to make moral judgments. And, the Bible teaches that all of us should have a good conscience. Put these scriptures down—1 Timothy 1:19: "*Holding faith, and a good conscience.*" Put this one down—Acts chapter 24 and verse 16: Paul said—now, this is the Apostle Paul—it talks about his ambition: he said, "*And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void [of] offence toward God, and toward men*" (Acts 24:16).

Bill Gothard said that conscience—a good conscience—is this—an inner freedom of spirit and assurance from knowing that you have a transparency towards everyone, that no one is able to point a finger at you and accuse you of wrong toward him that you've never made right. Now, you can just take that definition by Bill Gothard and write the

word *love*. Listen to it again—“that inner freedom of spirit and assurance from knowing that you have a transparency toward everyone, that no one—no one—is able to point a finger at you and accuse you of wrongs toward him that you’ve never made right.” There is absolutely no way that you can have a good conscience without love. When you love, you’ll make it right; and when you make it right, you have that transparency. Now friend, that’ll do you more good than a sleeping pill. If you don’t have assurance—if you’re doubting your salvation and you’ve given your heart to Jesus Christ—you’d better check up and see if perhaps there’s some bitterness in your heart, some sin in your life.

It is an acid that will destroy your assurance. Look at verses 19 and 20 again: *“And hereby”—now, he’s talking...“hereby” refers to “love”—“And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things”* (1 John 3:19–20). Your heart will condemn you, and you will never—listen—never have a good conscience until you learn to love. When you love—when you love—I mean, truly love—when you’ve made it right—you’re going to have that sweet assurance. So, here’s the first legacy of love. And, he’s going to build one upon another. The first legacy of love is a good conscience.

## **II. A Great Confidence**

Here’s the second legacy of love—not only a good conscience, but a great confidence. Now, notice how one folds into another. Look in verse 19: *“And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God”* (1 John 3:19–21). Confidence—boldness. First of all, my heart doesn’t condemn me, and all of this is in the context of love. When my heart doesn’t condemn me, then I have confidence toward God—boldness in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Well,” you say, “What good is this confidence?” Well, this confidence, dear friend, that you have with God—this confident heart that comes out of a clean conscience—is what helps you to pray and get your prayers answered. Look again at this passage of scripture. Now, watch this: *“If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God”—and it’s all linked together. Verse 22—“And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things [which] are pleasing in his sight”* (1 John 3:21–22). Now, what commandments is he talking about? Well, just go down to verse 23—the last part: *“That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment”* (1 John 3:23). That’s what he’s talking about.

How do you get your prayers answered? Have a good conscience. What does that do? It gives you a great confidence, and you can come to God and ask in His name and

get your prayer answered. Answered prayer is not for rebels; answered prayer is not for those whose hearts are filled with hate. It is not. It is not. It is not. The Bible says, *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me”* (Psalm 66:18). That’s a prayer promise that we don’t like to quote, but that’s one of the promises. That’s a prayer promise.

Let me illustrate this. Have you ever read over there in 1 Peter chapter 3, where Peter is telling husbands and wives how to dwell together as heirs of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7)? I like that phrase—“the grace of life.” That’s kind of like the cherry on top—the grace of life, a happy marriage. “Husbands and wives, dwell together as heirs of the grace of life, that”—and he says—“that prayers to God be not hindered” (1 Peter 3:7).

Now, let me give you a real example of this. You and your wife are having one of those little discussions that can be heard about three blocks away, and you get into it. And hey, look, sometimes Christians can do this—true, true? You look so holy. Christians can do this. I mean, they get their eyes off the Lord, and they get into one of these things. And, they’re at one another’s throats, and whatever else they’re doing. They are not dwelling together as heirs of the grace of life. And then, mother goes in to check the baby, and she comes out; and she’s got a frightened look on her face, and it’s obvious that the baby is very sick. And, you’re both believers, and you know that you need to pray. You feel so silly right now. You say, “We better pray. All right.” You can’t pray. You feel like fools praying in that atmosphere—that hostility, that venom. But, you know what you do? You say, “Sweetheart, I’m so sorry. I was wrong. I was a fool. Darling, forgive me.” She says, “Look, it was my fault, too.” And, you hug, kiss, make up. The conscience is clear. The assurance is back. And, you can pray. Isn’t that right? But, you cannot pray with a condemning heart. I mean, if you don’t have a good conscience, you cannot have a great confidence. And, if you don’t have a great confidence, you can’t get your prayers answered. It’s just that plain. That’s what John is talking about; it’s very practical. Love—love—gives a good conscience. And, when love gives a good conscience, love gets a great confidence.

### **III. A Gracious Communion**

Now, here’s the third legacy of love—and that’s the reason I told you, folks, if you were just even selfish, you would want to love: it gives a gracious communion. Look, if you will now, in verses 23 and 24: *“And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments and dwelleth in him, and he in him”—that is, you are in Jesus and Jesus is in you—“And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us”* (1 John 3:23–24)—the abiding spirit. Now, that’s the third legacy of love—a gracious communion. The Holy Spirit—just whispering to us that

we belong to God. The Lord is real to us. That's the ministry of the Holy Spirit—to take the things of Jesus and to show them to us. Look, when I learned to love and I lived by love, I'm going to have a good conscience. And, when I have a good conscience, I'm going to have a great confidence. And, when I have a great confidence, I'm going to have a gracious communion. I mean, the Holy Spirit is going to be whispering to my heart that I belong to Jesus Christ and He to me.

### **A. The Witness of the Spirit**

Do you know the reason that some Christians doubt their salvation? They don't have the witness of the Spirit. And, how do you know that you're saved—because some preacher has told you that you're saved? Or, does God's Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you're a child of God (Romans 8:16)? Now, the Holy Spirit can be there and you can be saved, and you can have absolutely no assurance because you've failed to love. And, the Holy Spirit is just grieved. And, you know the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to give you joy, and peace, and understanding, and wisdom, and power, and grace, and to make Jesus Christ real to you—not just what you hear on Sunday morning, some sermon, but God in your heart, abiding in the Spirit of God, that gracious communion; not nearly union, but communion, as *koinonia*—that's that word that goes all the way through the Book of 1 John.

But now, folks, let me tell you this about the Holy Spirit: the Holy Spirit is very gentle. This time I want you to turn to scripture. Would you turn to Ephesians chapter 4? Just turn to it. Ephesians chapter 4 and look, if you will, in verse 26: *“Be...angry, and sin not”*—and, by the way, the only way to be angry and sin not is to be angry at sin—*“Be...angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath”*—that is, “Husbands and wives, don't go to bed angry, back to back”—*“Neither give place to the devil”* (Ephesians 4:26–27). Now, when you do that—when you have unresolved anger—what you've done is just open the door to the devil. You've said, “Devil, come on in. Wreck my home. Wreck my marriage. Ruin my life. Take away my... Defile my conscience. Ruin my confidence, and destroy my communion.” You've given a place to the devil.

### **B. The Grieving of the Spirit**

But now, skip on down to verse 30—says, *“And grieve not the holy Spirit”*—when you give a place to the devil, what do you do? Well, you grieve the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is resident in your heart and in your life when you're saved—*“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption”*—now, if you have anger in your heart—if love is not there—that doesn't mean that the Holy Spirit of God forsakes you. He cannot—he will not. You are sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption. Do you see that? It's one of the great verses on eternal security. You are sealed by the Holy Spirit. Now, watch this—*“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger,*

*and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice” (Ephesians 4:30–31).*

## **6. Bitterness**

Now, what grieves the Holy Spirit? These things right here, and I want you to look at them. First of all, he says “bitterness.” Do you know what bitterness is? Bitterness is an unresolved hurt. Did you hear it? An unresolved hurt. Somebody’s hurt you; somebody’s done you wrong. It may be real; it may be imaginary, but you perceive that somebody has done you wrong. Anybody here like that—somebody’s hurt you? Maybe a child, father, mother, brother, sister, a boss, a dear sweet pastor? Somebody has done you wrong, and you have bitterness.

## **7. Wrath**

Now, watch this—bitterness turns to wrath. That’s next—wrath. Look at it in verse 31 (Ephesians 4:31). Do you know what the word *wrath* means? The word *wrath* has the idea of heat, something burning, sort of a slow burn. *The best illustration I can give you of this is to think of some oily rags in an attic or a closet, smoldering—or just the heat building up.* All right, now watch—first of all, there’s bitterness; and then, there’s that wrath, that slow burn.

## **8. Anger**

And then, it says “anger” (Ephesians 4:31). What is anger? What’s the difference between wrath and anger? Well, wrath is that slow burn, but anger is when somebody opens the door, and the oxygen hits those rags, and they burst into flame. Anger! You say, “Well, I lost my temper.” You probably found it. You know, when a person says, “I lost my temper,” what they’re saying is, “It’s not really my fault—it’s not really me. I lost it.” No, what is happening, folks, is that you’re showing what’s in your heart.

## **9. Clamor**

Now, watch it—bitterness turns to wrath; wrath turns to anger. And, what does anger turn to? Clamor. What is clamor? That’s speaking loudly. You’re wrong. Don’t shout. I’m not shouting. And, you begin to...you get your voice loud. You begin to say things, and you get on a roll.

## **10. Evil Speaking**

And then, watch this—clamor turns to evil speaking. Then, you begin to say things you would never have said, but you’re on a roll now. And, you begin to say to your loved one, to your child, “I wish you’d never been born into our family.” You begin to say to your parents, “I don’t love you.” You begin to say to your husband, “I want out of here. I want a divorce.” You begin to say to somebody, “I wish you were dead.” The devil says, “Tell them more—tell them more.” And, you say these awful, terrible, hurtful, horrible things. The Bible calls that *evil speaking*.



## 11. Malice

And then, he says “malice.” You know what that is? That’s when evil speaking turns to the desire to hurt somebody. “To do malice” means to *actually* harm them. You may want to hurt them financially, emotionally, physically. You may want to abuse them, and you may do things in a rage. You look back—you say, “My God, how did I do that?” I’ll tell you how you did it: you weren’t abiding; you weren’t Spirit-filled. You let the sun go down upon your wrath. You gave a place to the devil, and you grieved the Holy Spirit. “*Grieve not the holy Spirit*” (Ephesians 4:30).

When you grieve the Spirit of God—when you grieve Him—He’s so gentle. Have you ever seen somebody’s spirit just close up? I’ve done some awful dumb things in my life. I’ve said some things to Joyce I ought not to say, and I’ve just watched her spirit close up. I can tell when I’ve done wrong—like that. I know I’ve done wrong. The Holy Spirit’s a dove. He’s not a lion; He’s a dove. You can grieve the Holy Spirit. By the way, the Holy Spirit is a person. The Jehovah’s Witnesses don’t believe He’s a person. You can’t grieve an influence. I can’t grieve that piano. You can only grieve a person. And, by the way, you can only grieve somebody who loves you. *Grieve* is a love word. Your neighbors’ kids will vex you; your own kids will grieve you. Amen? You can only grieve somebody that loves you. You see, the Holy Spirit of God loves you; but when you don’t love, you grieve the Spirit of God, and He closes up, and He withdraws, and you don’t have that communion with God that you ought.

Oh, but the legacy of love! When you love, you have a good conscience. Then, you have a great confidence. And then, you have a gracious communion. Isn’t that great? Isn’t love wonderful? And, the love of God, the Bible tells us in Romans 5:5—it’s “*shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.*”

## Conclusion

Now, I’m finished, but let me tell you something very clear, I hope: it will do you no good whatsoever if you say, “Well, the pastor said to love, and I’m gonna love.” And so, you just grit your teeth, and clench your fist, and say, “I’m gonna love if it kills me.” You don’t have what it takes. Listen to me—listen carefully. Are you listening? *Love is not the way to God; God is the way to love.* That’s more than a turn of phrase.

You listen carefully now. You’re in chapter 3. Go back to 1 John. You’re in chapter 3, but look over here, if you will, in chapter 4, verse 7: “*Beloved, let us love one another*”—now, watch this—“*for love is of God*”—that is, “It comes from God”—“*and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love*” (1 John 4:7–8). You see, listen, the only way—the only way—that you can love is to have the love of God in your hearts. Do you know when that comes? “*Whosoever is born of God*” (1 John 3:9). Are you born of God?



Now, what is the new birth? It's not a feeling; it is a transaction, where you come to the Lord in absolute sincerity and you say, "Lord, I'm a sinner, and I can't save myself. But, I need to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You with all of my heart. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin, and save me." The Bible says in this same book of 1 John chapter 5 and verse 1: "when we believe, we're born of God" (1 John 5:1). There's not an emotional matter. It may show in emotions, but your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature. Salvation is the deepest work of God. He doesn't do the deepest work in the shallowest part. You just trust Him. Say, "Come into my heart." Listen, as a teenage boy, I trusted Christ, and I can tell you this—and God is listening: from that moment on, there's been a river of love flowing in me, and it's of Him. Love is of God. You'll never love your wife, you'll never love your children, you'll never love your neighbors as you ought until you give your heart to Jesus. Remember again, *love is not the way to God; God is the way to love*. And, Jesus is the way to the Father. What is the legacy of love? What is it? The legacy of love is a good conscience, a great confidence, and a gracious communion. That's love.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. And, if you've never received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, I'd like to help you right now. No one moving, no one stirring, no one leaving—pray for those round about you. Why don't you pray this way if you're not certain that you're saved? "Dear God"—just speak to Him—"I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. Thank You, Jesus, for paying for my sin with Your blood on the cross. I open my heart now. Now, by faith, I receive You. Just by faith I receive You as my Lord and my Savior. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus"—say that from your heart—"Save me, Jesus."

Did you ask Him? Then tell Him this: "Lord Jesus, thank You for saving me. I receive it by faith. I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of You, and I will follow You the rest of my life wherever You lead me—not in order to be saved, but because I have been saved and because I love You. In Your name I pray. Amen."

# Testing the Prophets

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 20, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 John 4:1–6

*“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”*

1 JOHN 4:1

## Outline

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- A. Test Prophets by Their Method
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### Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and find the book of 1 John, please. We’re going to take up where we left off last Sunday, 1 John chapter 4. God has arranged for us to have a wonderful Christmas message at the same time that we’re continuing our journey through the book of 1 John under the heading “The Sweetest Fellowship This Side of Heaven.” Let’s read 1 John 4, verses 1 through 6: *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try”—and that word try literally means “test”—“the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”* The “spirit of antichrist” was in the world even in the day of the apostle John. *“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and*

*the spirit of error.*" (1 John 4:1–6)

Often, we, as Christians, are called believers, but listen very carefully: Unbelief is a virtue—unbelief is a virtue. Look at the first three words of this chapter; look at it: *"Beloved, believe not"*—*"Beloved, believe not."* (1 John 4:1) Now there are wonderful things we need to believe, and the Christian life is the life of faith. And the Bible says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." (Hebrews 11:6) But now, remember this: We're not told just to believe anything. Faith is no better than its origin, and faith is no better than its object. Somehow we get the idea that we're supposed to believe anything and everything because we are believers.

Now, let me say again what faith is. Faith is not just simply deciding on what you want to believe and then believing it. Or faith is not trying to make yourself believe what you feel is not true. As a little boy said, "Faith is believing what you know ain't so." That's not what faith is, either. Faith is getting a word from God and acting on that. That is Bible faith.

Without faith, it's impossible to please God. So, that's very dangerous for you to live without faith. But there's something else that's even, perhaps, more dangerous, and that is to believe and put faith in the wrong thing. Look at the scripture again: *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but [test] the spirits"*—*"try the spirits"*—*"whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."* (1 John 4:1) Now the apostle John is warning us about false prophets. It's very interesting, because if you will read 1 John, you will find out that the word *love* is a significant word. As a matter of fact, we preached on it last Sunday. And the last part of this chapter again deals with love. But right in the middle of this passage on love, he warns about false prophets, because sometimes we've gotten the idea that in order to be loving we have to be softheaded. Now, friend, we're to have a soft heart, not a soft head. Because we're loving, that doesn't mean that we have to put our arms around everybody else and say, "Well, God bless you. Your faith is just as good as mine. We're all un-American if we think there is any difference." It will be a great day in America when Americans turn from religion to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, folks, everything spiritual is not of God. The Bible says, *"Believe not every spirit, but [test] the spirits"*—*"try the spirits"*—*"whether they are of God."* (1 John 4:1) You know, I've been amazed not only that some people will not believe; I've also been amazed at what some people will believe. Now there is a titanic struggle going on this Christmas season between Christ and antichrist and that has gone on from time immemorial. Now the devil had rather get you to believe a wrong thing than to do a wrong thing. Did you know that? The devil had rather have you believe a wrong thing than to do a wrong thing. Why? Because the thought is the father of the deed. If he can get the wrong thoughts into your mind, then he doesn't have to worry about the deeds.

*“As a man thinketh...so is he.” (Proverbs 23:7) You sow a thought; you reap a deed. You sow a deed; you reap a habit. You sow a habit; you reap a character. You sow a character; you reap a destiny.* It all begins with a thought.

So the devil wants to set up a false belief system. And so, just as the Bible teaches us what to believe, the Bible very clearly and plainly says, *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but [test] the spirits”—“try the spirits”—“whether they are of God.”* (1 John 4:1) So God tells us here to test our faith. And, by the way, *the faith that can't be tested can't be trusted.* Put it to the test. The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 21, *“Prove all things.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

Now, what reasons do we have for believing what we believe? What is the difference this Christmas season between the true spirit of Christmas and the false spirit that's in the world? What is the difference between Christ and antichrist? You had better know; you'd better learn. You'd better be able to discern the difference between a true prophet and a false prophet. Behind every prophet there is a spirit: either it's the spirit of Satan or it's the Spirit of the Almighty.

Now in this day and age in which we're living we're being bombarded by all kinds of things. How do you test a prophet? I want to mention three or four ways. I want you to jot these down. These are not specifically in our text. And then we're going to come to our text itself and then sharpen the focus a little more. But let me give you some ways to test a prophet and whether or not he is of God.

#### **A. Test Prophets by Their Method**

Number one: Test them by their methods—by their methods. Put in your margin Jude verse 4, no chapter; there's just one chapter—Jude verse 4. And Jude here is talking about false prophets, and he says, *“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Jude 1:4) Now the key to that verse and the reason I wanted to use it is he says, *“There are certain men crept in unawares.”* Unbelief, false doctrine, is very subtle. It just sort of comes in the side door. It just slips in. It creeps in. They are creeps. That's what Jude is telling us. Think, first of all, of their method. They are very subtle. You know, the Bible said of Satan in the garden, he is *“more subtil than any beast of the field.”* (Genesis 3:1) *“He is a liar, and the father of it.”* (John 8:44) And the best lie sounds the most like the truth. So, put down, number one, their method: They are very subtle.

#### **B. Test Prophets by Their Motive**

Number two: their motive. Second Peter chapter 2, verses 2 and 3: *“And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.”* (2

Peter 2:2–3) Now false prophets always are covetous, and with slick talk they make merchandise of gullible people. So this is their motive: They are out to exploit people. Now they may make merchandise of you financially, they may make merchandise of you politically, or they may make merchandise of you personally. That is, they may not care for money or political power, but they themselves want to show themselves that they are somebody.

### **C. Test Prophets by Their Morals**

You have to watch their method. You have to watch their motive. And here's the third thing: You have to watch their morals. In that verse I gave you—in Jude verse 4—the Bible says they turn *“the grace of our God into lasciviousness.”* (Jude 1:4) What does that mean? What does *lasciviousness* mean? It means “immorality.” They say, “Oh well, you're saved by grace, so therefore, you can live any way that you like.” Friend, listen to me. Don't trust them with your money, and don't trust them with your daughters. They've turned *“the grace of our God into lasciviousness.”* You can test them by their morals.

### **D. Test Prophets by Their Ministry**

Also, you can test them by their ministry. Matthew chapter 7, verses 15 and 16—Jesus is speaking, and He says, *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.”* (Matthew 7:15–16) If you want to test a prophet, look at the fruit of his ministry. Jesus said, “You'll know them by their fruits.” (Matthew 7:16) Check out those who are the fruit of their ministry. Measure those who are following him. Like pastor, like people. Like prophet, like followers.

### **E. Test Prophets by Their Message**

However, the main way that you are to test them is by their message. Look, if you will now, here in 1 John again—chapter 4, verses 2 and 3: *“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”* (1 John 4:2–3)

Now several Sundays ago, I told you about antichrist. The prefix *anti* means “against” and it means at the same time “instead of.” It has a double meaning. And that's the way Satan does his work. Satan is against Christ, so he brings in a substitute instead of Christ. He does not deny religion; it is his chief tool. His method is not so much a denial as it is a misrepresentation. And so you might ask a false prophet, “Do you believe in Jesus?” and he'll say, “Of course I believe in Jesus.” But notice what Paul says—and put this scripture down—2 Corinthians 11 and verse 4: *“For if he that cometh*

*preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.*" (2 Corinthians 11:4) Paul is saying, "You are so foolish that you might let somebody come along and tell you about another Jesus. You might let somebody come along and lead you to another spirit. You might let somebody tell you about another gospel." And Paul goes on to say that *"Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."* (2 Corinthians 11:14)

Now all of that is just setting up the message this morning. Now, look up here and pay attention to me. This Christmas season, like every Christmas, you're going to choose between Christ and antichrist. And the Bible says here that you're not to believe every spirit; you're to try the spirits—you are to test the spirits—whether they be of God. Now in order to test anything, you have to have a standard; you have to have a measuring rod; you have to have some criterion in order to test. Isn't that right? All right now, when John tells us to believe not every spirit, but to test the spirits—try the spirits—whether it's Christ or antichrist, he gives us three major tests—okay?—three major tests. How do you test them? How do you know? Are you listening? Are you thinking? Do you have your Bible open? All right now, I want to give you these three major tests this Christmas. So at this Christmas, who are you going to celebrate: Christ or antichrist? Let's find out how you test them.

## **I. You Test a False Prophet by the Word of God**

Number one: You test the spirits by the Word of God. Look, if you will again, in verse 6. You're in 1 John chapter 4; look in verse 6. The apostle John says, *"We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us."* (1 John 4:6) Now John was an apostle, and he, with the other apostles, brought the Word of God. As a matter of fact, when we started in this little book of 1 John, in the first chapter—in 1 John chapter 1, verse 1—he says, *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."* (1 John 1:1–3)

Now the apostles were those who saw Jesus, who heard Jesus, who were anointed and appointed to bring the Word of God, and that's the reason the Bible says in the book of Ephesians chapter 2, verse 20, that we *"are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets"* (Ephesians 2:20)—the prophets who wrote the Old Testament, the apostles who wrote the New Testament. This church is squarely *"built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets"* who brought to us the Word of God.

"Adrian Rogers, are you a prophet?" Not in the classical sense, not with a capital p.



“Adrian Rogers, are you an apostle?” Not in the classical sense with a capital a. But I want to tell you something. I want everybody to listen. As long as I hold this book in my hand and preach what this book says, I can preach with the authority of a prophet and an apostle because I’m preaching what they said—what they said. The church is *“built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.”* (Ephesians 2:20)

So, when I have some prophet who comes along, some spirit who comes along, how do I check him out? I check him out by the Word of God—by the Word of God. It’s not that I get some sort of a feeling and I say, “Well, I think this, or I feel that.” You know, there was a time when preachers would stand in the pulpit and say, “The Bible says…” And then they started saying, “Well, the church says…” And now they just scratch their heads and say, “Well, it seems to me…” or, “I feel…” No, no, no! What does the Word of God say? Look at it again. In 1 John 4, verse 6, John the apostle says, *“We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us.”* (1 John 4:6) And so we learn this, that when we stand upon the Word of God, Satan’s kingdom begins to tremble. The devil came to Jesus in the wilderness to tempt Jesus. How did Jesus deal with the devil? By using the Word of God. Three times Jesus said in those three temptations, “Satan, it is written…”; “It is written…”; “It is written.” (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10) And Jesus thrust Satan through with the sword of the Word of God.

You know what I’ve learned? You know what I’ve learned? I’ve learned there is incredible power in the Word of God. Psalm 138, verse 2—the psalmist says to the Father, *“Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.”* (Psalms 138:2) Now, don’t take that lightly: *“Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.”* When some false prophet comes, friend, if you will use the Word of God, it will go through that business like a white-hot cannonball through a crate of eggs. There is power—there is incredible power—in the Word of God.

Now if you don’t know the Word of God, if you don’t know how to rightly handle the Word of God, you’re going to be a sitting duck for these false apostles, and you’re not going to know how to test the spirits or try the spirits. So, first of all, how do you test? By the Word of God. Everything else we have is going to follow out of that.

## **II. You Test a False Prophet by the Son of God**

Now, here’s the second test: Not only do you test a false prophet by the Word of God, but you test a false prophet by the Son of God. That’s the second test: by the Son of God. Look now, if you will, in verses 2 and 3: *“Hereby, know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”* (1 John 4:2–3) How do you test? *“He that knoweth God heareth us”* (1



John 4:6)—by the Word of God. Number two: How do you test? By the Son of God. Friend, this is black print on white paper. What this verse talks about is Christmas. Verses 2 and 3 are talking about Christmas. It is talking about the Incarnation. It is talking about Jesus Christ being born in Bethlehem. It is talking about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, coming in the flesh.

Now I want you to slow down with me and look very carefully because John is very exact in what he says. Look in verse 2: *“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.”* Just underscore that: *“Jesus Christ.”* And then, look in verse 3: *“And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.”* (1 John 4:2–3) Now John uses two names—Jesus, which is His human name; and Christ, which is His divine title—and he puts them together. Christ is not His last name; that is His title. He is Jesus Christ. He is man and Messiah at the same time. Jesus is His earthly name. Christ, which means “Messiah,” “the Anointed One,” “the Appointed One,” is His divine title.

Now there’s never another one like the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what Christmas is all about. Jesus is the God-Man. Jesus is God in human flesh. And this is the fundamental doctrine of our faith: God stepped out of heaven and took upon Him human flesh. We call that the Incarnation. *Carnis* means “flesh.” The Incarnation—He took human flesh. Now, listen to me very carefully. When God became a man, when Jesus Christ took upon Himself humanity, He did not take it while He was here on earth and then lay it aside and go back to heaven. He took His humanity back to heaven with Him. For all eternity He will be a man. I hope that will sink in.

The apostle John was on the Island of Patmos. He was an aged man now after some sixty years when he’d talked and walked with the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is ascended to heaven. The apostle John now has a vision of Christ. And in Revelation chapter 1, verse 12, he says, *“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps”—or “the chest”—“with a golden girdle.”* (Revelation 1:12–13) After sixty years, John has this revelation of Christ in heaven, and he sees one like the Son of man. Jesus became the Son of man that you and I might become sons and daughters of God. Jesus was born of a virgin that we might be born again. What an encouragement that is to me, that for all eternity I have a High Priest who is touched with the feeling of my infirmities. When I get to heaven, the only God I will ever see is Jesus, and I’ll actually see the nail prints in His hands. He’s there. He will bear those marks of our redemption for all eternity.

Let me give you a great verse. This blessed me. In 1 Timothy—write it down—chapter 3 and verse 16—you remember John 3:16; remember 1 Timothy 3:16—here’s

what Paul told Timothy: *“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:”—* now, watch this—*“God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”* (1 Timothy 3:16) Now I want you to take two little phrases out of that: *“God was manifest in the flesh”* and *“seen of angels.”* Now, just slow down and think with me for a moment. Think about this, Brother Jim: Did you know this is the first time the angels had ever seen Him? They had never seen Him before. They’d never seen Him—I mean, because He dwelt with the Father in pure spirit. It was not until He took flesh that the angels could ever see Him. They said, “There He is! We have lived in the light of His glory since we were created.” But the first time an angel ever saw Him, who had dwelt with Him through eons, was when He was in the straw right there. He was *“seen of angels.”* Isn’t that something? They said, “Look at that! There He is! We can see Him! We can see Him!”

He became a man. He is still a man. John saw Him in the glory—*“one like unto the Son of man.”* (Revelation 14:14) His name is Jesus! That’s His humanity. But His title is Christ. You see, listen: *“Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.”* (1 John 4:2) *He is as much man as if He were not God at all, but He is as much God as if He were not man at all. He’s not half God and half man, not all man and no God, not all God and no man. He is the God-Man—never another like Him.*

That’s what Christmas is all about. And if you don’t understand that, you’re not going to understand Christmas. And if you don’t accept that, you are not of Christ! You, my friend, are of antichrist! That’s what John says: “Don’t believe every spirit. Test the spirits whether they are of God.” (1 John 4:1) Don’t you let somebody come along here and parade about the fact that, “Oh, we believe in the man Jesus, the great prophet, the great teacher,” and deny His deity. It is a heresy to deny His humanity. It is a heresy to deny His deity.

A Washington, DC, minister said—and I’m quoting him—“We liberal clergymen are no longer interested in the fundamental-modernist controversy. We do not believe that we should even waste our time engaging in it. So far as we’re concerned, it makes no difference whether Jesus Christ was born of a virgin or not. We don’t bother to form an opinion on the subject.” That guy ought to get out of the pulpit and get an honest job. A preacher in Virginia said this: “We have closed our minds to such trivial considerations as the question of the resurrection of Christ. If you fundamentalists wish to believe in that nonsense, we have no objection. But we have more important things to preach than the presence or absence of an empty tomb twenty centuries ago.” Can you imagine that? Reverend Dr. DD—“Doodle Digger.”

Two denominational leaders—I’m going to quote one at a time—the first one: “Christ...”—and I hate to use this word, but it’s his word—“Christ was a bastard who

rose above the circumstances of His unfortunate birth.” That’s a clergyman. Here’s another one: “Is not this tendency to deify Jesus more heathen than Christian?” My folks, that’s the pabulum, the heresy, that’s being preached in pulpits today, and it is the spirit of antichrist. He is the God-Man. *“Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is the spirit of antichrist,”* (1 John 4:3) who was in the world in John’s day. And it will be in the world today.

Now, look, if you will, in 1 John 2, verse 22: *“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.”* (1 John 2:22) Look, if you will, in 2 John. Just flip over. You’re in 1 John. Go to 2 John chapter 1, verses 7 through 11: *“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.”* *There is no way that you can be right with God and wrong about Jesus.* *“He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there any come unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”* (2 John 1:7–11)

Now I want you to notice. Go back to our text again. Look at it. The fourth chapter—look in verse 2: *“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus”—*that’s His humanity—*“Christ”—*that’s His deity—*“is come...”* (1 John 4:2) Underscore that phrase *“is come.”* That speaks of His preexistence. You and I were born into this world; He *came* into this world. He came from another world. The Bible says—look in verse 9, if you will—*“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son.”* (1 John 4:9)

Now we talk sometimes sentimentally about little babies coming from heaven. They don’t come from heaven; they come from Mama’s womb. Now I thank God that they are formed there in the mother’s womb, and that is a miracle. But the Lord Jesus Christ, when He was born at Bethlehem, was the One who created His mother, and He was as old as His Father. He did not have His beginning at Bethlehem; He had His birth at Bethlehem. God sent His Son. Jesus Christ *is come* into the world. This speaks of His preexistence.

Now, what are we talking about? We’re talking about “don’t believe every spirit. Try the spirits—test the spirits—whether they are of God.” (1 John 4:1) How do you do it? Number one: by the Word of God. *“He that knoweth God heareth us,”* (1 John 4:6) John says. Number two: by the Son of God. Find out what they believe about Jesus Christ. Anybody comes to your house peddling their stuff door to door: You check them out on Jesus—check them out on Jesus. And you’d better find out what the Bible teaches

about the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God and very God. *“Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh...seen of angels.”* (1 Timothy 3:16) I love that. Praise God!

### **III. You Test a False Prophet by the Spirit of God**

Now here's the third way—here's the third way. I mean, three tests now. How do you test a false prophet? Number one: by the Word of God. You got that? Number two: by the Son of God. You have that? Number three: by the Spirit of God. Now, go back to 1 John chapter 4, and look, if you will, in verses 4 through 6: *“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them:”—who? The false prophets—“because greater is he that is in you”—who is in you? The Holy Spirit—“than he that is in the world”—who is that? The spirit of antichrist. “They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.”* (1 John 4:4–6)

Now you test by the Spirit of God. The Bible says, *“A threefold cord is not [easily] broken.”* (Ecclesiastes 4:12) And what is the threefold cord that we have? The threefold cord that we have is the Word of God, the Son of God, and the Spirit of God. Now when you put these together, that is so very important because, folks, don't think that you can take this book and by intellectual superiority that you can understand the subtleties of false doctrine. Now you will never understand the Bible unless the Holy Spirit teaches you—unless the Holy Spirit opens you. The Bible says, *“If it were possible, Satan is so clever he would deceive the very elect.”* (Matthew 24:24) So you've got to have not only the Word of God that tells about the Son of God, but you have to have the Spirit of God to help you understand the Word of God to know the Son of God.

Now all of this is together. You see, listen. Jesus said in John chapter 10—not 1 John, but John chapter 10—something very beautiful—verses 4 and 5. And He calls us “sheep,” and it says, *“And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep...”*—that is, “the children,” “those born again”—*“and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.”* (John 10:4–5) Do you know the voice of the Holy Spirit? Do you know the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ? You see, it is the Holy Spirit of God who takes the things of God and makes them real to you. John 3, verse 27: *“John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.”* (John 3:27) First Corinthians 12, verse 3: *“Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”* (1 Corinthians 12:3) The only way that you were able to make Him Lord of your life is the Holy Spirit of God enabled you to

do that. And so we have the object of our faith, the Lord Jesus; we have the record of our faith, the Word of God; and we have the energizer of our faith, the Holy Spirit of God, who illumines us and takes the things of Jesus and shows them to us and makes them real to us.

## Conclusion

¶ Now I have a radio in my home. My radio has two bands: AM and FM. And I can tune into the signals that come in AM, or I can tune into the signals that come in FM. If you have a radio and it's anywhere modern, you have those two parts—those two channels—the AM and the FM channel. And both of them are constantly sending out signals. Now today, there are two signals coming out in the world: the AM—that's the antichrist message; the FM—that's the Father's message. And they are being broadcast all the time. There's the spirit of antichrist just coming out in the world. It is all over. It's in the air like a fungus. ¶

You can see it in so many ways in homogenization, in amalgamation. And let me tell you one of the strangest things. You know what we're told? We're told, "Look, Brother Bob, you may believe one thing"—of course, he and I believe the same thing—"but you may believe one thing;"—just for the sake of illustration—"I believe another thing. And what you believe is true to you. What I believe is true to me. And it's just wonderful that everybody just creates his own truth. That's the world we're living in right now, folks. That is the world, and it is so subtle.

¶ I was on a program talking about why I believe in Jesus Christ, and we had some of our Jewish friends there. And I talked about what I believe about Jesus Christ, and my dear rabbi friends talked about what they believe. And then a political figure—a well-known political figure, I'll not use his name—stood up and he said, "Well, Dr. Rogers, I embrace what you believe. I, like you, believe that. But to my dear friends over here, I want you to know, just because I believe his message, doesn't mean I disbelieve yours." You think about that—think about that. Now, friend, two things that are different can't both be right. They could both be wrong. But I guarantee you that if they are different they can't both be right. ¶

But that's the world that we're living in today. And it's around in the air like a fungus. It's New Age. It's called postmodernism—past liberalism, past New Ageism—where everybody creates their own reality, and everybody decides for themselves what is true. I'm here to tell you one more time with all of my heart, with all my soul, and with all of the function, emotion of my will: There is a right; there is a wrong. There is the Spirit of Christ; there is the spirit of antichrist. The Bible is the Word of God, Jesus is the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit of God will help you to understand that. And it's time that we

clear off a space and say, “God help us. Here we stand.” And this Christmas, you are going to be faced as never before with the spirit of antichrist and the Spirit of Christ.

Look up here. You’re looking at one man who says, “As for me, I choose Christ; I choose Jesus. And I know that I know that I know. I can test the spirits.” God says, “Don’t believe everything.” I can test the spirits by the Word of God, by the Son of God, and by the Spirit of God, *“because greater is he that is in [us], than he that is in the world.”* (1 John 4:4) ¶

@ Jesus is as much man as if He were not God at all, but He is as much God as if He were not man at all., 9  
 @ The faith that can't be tested can't be trusted., 3  
 @ There is no way that you can be right with God and wrong about Jesus., 10  
 @ You sow a thought; you reap a deed. You sow a deed; you reap a habit., 3  
 # Two messages that are different can't both be right., 12  
 # Two signals in the world  
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# Our Identification in Christ

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: June 11, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 4:17**

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles tonight, and turn, if you will, please, to 1 John chapter 4. I want to talk to you about something very, very important for our Bible study tonight. And really, if God writes this upon your heart, it will be a great, great blessing to you. First John chapter 4 and verse 17. Now, here's the subject; it is not a catchy title, but it is an important subject. As a matter of fact, I'm going to read you something that's going to be very concise. But, a greater truth has never, ever been told in fewer words. The subject is "Our Identification with Christ"—"Our Identification with Christ."

Now, listen to 1 John chapter 4, verse 17: *"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment"*—now, here's the statement that I said no greater truth has been said in fewer words—*"because as he is, so are we in this world"* (1 John 4:17). The last part of that verse is what I'm bearing down on: *"as he is"*—as Jesus is—*"so are we in this world"* (1 John 4:17). Now, that is the doctrine of that identification with Jesus Christ. In a Christian, Jesus lives, walks, talks, breathes, and acts in the flesh. *"As he is, so are we"* (1 John 4:17). Now, this could be called "union with Christ," but if you understand it, you'll have Christmas, and Easter, and Pentecost

365 days a year.

## I. A Powerful Truth

Now, the first thing I want to lay on your heart is this: that identification with Christ is a powerful truth. Now, you see, Christianity is this: that Jesus Christ identified Himself with us. That's what Christmas is all about. He became as we are that we might become as He is.

Now, I'm going to give you a number of scriptures; and tonight, we're going to do something a little different than we normally do. Normally, we take one passage of Scripture and go right through it. But tonight, we're going to go all over the Bible, so you get out a slip of paper. And, I'm going to give you a number of scriptures, because we're coming at it from a lot of different angles.

First of all, look, if you will, in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21—here's what it says: *"For he"*—that is, "God the Father"—*"hath made him"*—that is, "Jesus"—*"to be sin for us"*—that is, "He is becoming like we are"—*"he hath made him to be sin for us"*—He didn't make Him to be a sinner; He was not a sinner, but He made Him to be sin for us—*"that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"* (2 Corinthians 5:21). Now, there are two little phrases there: "for us," "in Him." *"He hath made him to be sin for us...that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"* (2 Corinthians 5:21). "He for us," "we in Him"—that's called "identification with the Lord Jesus Christ." Now, let me show you how that works out.

### A. We Are Identified with Jesus in His Death

For example, we are identified with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death. This time, turn to Romans chapter 5, verse 8: *"[For] God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8). That is, He died as our substitute. That is, His death had my name on it. When Jesus died, He died for me; therefore, I died with Him.

I may have told you before, the late, great Dr. Robert G. Lee, former pastor of this church, went to Israel. He was standing at the foot of Calvary, and the guide was lecturing. And, he said, "Have any of you ever been here before?" It was Dr. Lee's first trip to the Holy Land, but he lifted his hand. And, the guide said, "When were you here?" He said, "Two thousand years ago." And, he was! Were you there when they crucified our Lord? You were there, and you died there on that cross because His death was for you. Christ died for us. He became the Son of man so that we might become sons of God. He took our sins so that we might take His innocence. He became guilty that we might be acquitted. He took our despair that we might be filled with joy. He took our

shame that we might have His glory. He endured the pangs of Hell that we might know the joys of Heaven.

### **B. We Are Identified with Jesus in His Resurrection**

We are identified with Him in death, but number two, we are identified with Him in His resurrection. Now, in Romans chapter 6, look in verse 4: *“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death”—that’s His 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). Jesus Christ had a life that the grave could not hold. I’m not merely with Jesus on the cross; I have walked out of that empty tomb with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, there is a supernatural life for every believer because we are identified with the Lord Jesus Christ in His resurrection. That means if Jesus was raised for you, you’re buried with Him, you’re raised with Him, you have, now, resurrection life. You’re not awaiting the resurrection only; you have resurrection now.

### **C. We Are Identified with Jesus in His Victory**

Number three: You are united with Jesus Christ in His death; you’re united, identified, with Jesus Christ in His burial and resurrection; and you are also, therefore, ipso facto, united with Jesus—identified with Jesus—in His victory. This time, go back to 1 John chapter 4, and look in verse 4: John is talking about the victorious resurrection life that you and I should live, and he says, *“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them”—who is the “them”? The malevolent, wicked forces of Satan—“and have overcome them: [for] greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4). Now, when Jesus died on that cross, He won a victory. He said, *“Now [is] the prince of this world...cast out”—“Now is the judgment of this world”* (John 12:31). Now, His victory is my victory. If Jesus has victory, I have victory. Because He has won, I have won.

## **II. A Practical Truth**

Now, I’ve said identification with Christ is a very powerful truth—it’s a very powerful truth. And now, secondly—listen—identification with Christ—and we’re going to get practical now—is a very present and practical truth. Now, what does it mean to you—that *“as he is, so are we in this world”* (1 John 4:17)? What does that mean to you tomorrow when you go to work? What does that mean to you after a prayer meeting, if you go out to a restaurant or go home? Well, let me tell you some things that are true about Jesus and, therefore, are true about you. Remember again 1 John 4:17: *“as he is, so are we”—now, listen to this next phrase—“in this world.”*

Now, many of us say, “Well, I’m going to Heaven. Then, when I get to Heaven, I’m

going to be like Jesus,” but that’s not what our verse says. Our verse says, “*As he is, so are we in this world*” (1 John 4:17). May I say, “In Memphis, Tennessee”? May I say, you, if you’re saved, are to be identified with Jesus in this world, here and now. Let’s see how that works out.

#### A. His Wisdom Is Our Wisdom

For example, His wisdom is our wisdom. Put down “1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 30”: “*But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom*”—“*who of God is made unto us wisdom*” (1 Corinthians 1:30). Most of us say we need wisdom. Well, if you have Jesus, you don’t need wisdom; you have wisdom. You say, “Well, if I have it, how come I don’t have it?” Because you have not laid hold on that which is your birthright. “*[Jesus] is made unto [you] wisdom*” (1 Corinthians 1:30). Does He have wisdom? Yes. “*As he is, so are we in this world*” (1 John 4:17). That seems almost too good to be true; and so, we want to fall back on our own wisdom rather than, with the Apostle James, claiming the wisdom that God has unqualifiedly promised to those of us who love Him and trust Him.

I read something many years ago about a man who, out west, discovered some very rich gold mines. He became fabulously wealthy. He moved to New York. He had a very fine, intelligent son, and he sent his son off to engineering and mining school, ‘cause that was the family legacy—mining. One day, when the son graduated with honors, he came into his father’s office, and put his diploma on the desk, and said, “Father, I have graduated with honors. I want to go to work for the company. I would like for you to give me your finest mine so that I can go and work it.” The father said, “Son, that’s my plan for you, but I think, first of all, even though you’ve been to school, I think it would be better, Son, if you were to put on a pair of overalls, and go down and work in the mines, and get some hands-on experience.” He said, “Dad, we have learned things in mining school and engineering school that you’ve never even thought of. I can handle it. Give me one of your best mines.”

The father gave to this boy the superintendency of a very fine gold mine, but it was kind of dangerous. It was backed up against a lake. And, this young man went out there, and he fired the superintendent. The old man had been working there for years. And, he fired some of the other workers and brought in some of his youngsters, his young turks—college grads, engineering students—to work the mine, to show his dad how it could really be done. But, water began to seep into the mine. It had to be shored up intricately—and they tried, but the water kept seeping in. The boy wired his father back to New York and said, “Dad, we’ve got a problem here. What do you suggest?” The father never answered. After a while, they did some more shoring; they did some

more patching, but the water kept seeping in. The boy sent a second telegram, and then a third, and finally, in desperation, he said, “Dad, if you don’t tell me what to do, we’re going to lose this gold mine.” His dad sent back a wire this time and said, “Shove your diploma in that hole.”

There are times when we think we know our Heavenly Father, I believe, also. We fail to come to God and ask God for the wisdom that He has given. “As he is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17). Jesus Christ will give you wisdom. I have prayed for wisdom over and over again—not praying because I thought that God would not give it, but because I know God will give wisdom. Mark, you know how many times we meet in prayer together, and we’ll bow our heads and pray, “O God, give us wisdom to know what to do.” And, thank God for the wisdom that He gives.

### **B. His Joy Is Our Joy**

But, not only is His wisdom our wisdom, ladies and gentleman; His joy is our joy. Now, you need joy? You already have it. You say, “If I have it, why don’t I have it?” Because you haven’t realized what you have. Listen to John 15 and verse 11: “*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full*” (John 15:11). “As he is...” (1 John 4:17). He is the Christ of abounding joy. Do you have joy? If you don’t have joy, you’re living beneath your privileges. For the Bible commands us, “*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice*” (Philippians 4:4). How can I do that? Because “as he is, so [am I] in this world” (1 John 4:17). His joy is my joy. Now, it’s joy that transcends whatever happens; it’s not mere happiness. *Happiness depends, as you’ve heard me say, upon happenstance.* But, joy doesn’t depend upon happenstance; it’s rooted in the Lord Jesus. “As he is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17).

### **C. His Sorrow Is Our Sorrow**

Now, I want to say something else: not only is His wisdom our wisdom, not only is His joy our joy, but friend, His sorrow is our sorrow. Now, the Christian life is not a giddy life. We’re not to be going around like uproarious, backslapping morons all the time with never a serious thought. If you live in this world, if you are as Jesus is, you’ll know a broken heart. That’s not antithetical to joy. As a matter of fact, the joy that we have doesn’t take away from the pain. Sometimes it helps us to bear the pain. Philippians chapter 3 and verse 10: “*That I may know him*”—this is the prayer of the Apostle Paul—“*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings*” (Philippians 3:10). Have you ever prayed for sufferings? Paul did. Paul said, “Jesus, I want to know the fellowship—the richest, purest, deepest fellowship perhaps a person can have, and that is to suffer with You.”

Did you know that, when you are walking in the Spirit, that His sorrow will be your sorrow? Do you know that what breaks the heart of Jesus will break your heart? Someone described the modern Church as “a dry-eyed Church in a Hell-bent world.” Many times we get our entertainment from that which breaks His heart—watching frivolous, foolish, and sinful things and laughing at them. “*As he is, so are we in this world*” (1 John 4:17). And, I can tell you that the heart of our Savior is broken over the sins of this world. Do you have a broken heart? I have to ask myself that question. I have to ask myself that question before I come to the pulpit and preach a message like this: “Adrian, do you really believe what you’re preaching, or are you just saying it?” His joy is our joy. His sorrow is our sorrow.

#### **D. His Friends Are Our Friends**

I want to say something else—“*as he is, so are we in this world*” (1 John 4:17)—His friends are our friends. Now listen, Matthew 25, verse 40—write it down if you don’t want to turn to it: “*And the King shall answer and say unto them*”—and the King here represents Jesus—“*Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, [you’ve] done it unto me*” (Matthew 25:40). When you do something for one of the brothers of Jesus, it’s just like you’ve done it unto Jesus, because His friends are our friends. If you love Jesus, you’re going to love what Jesus loves. And, if you don’t love the brethren, certain conclusions are in order.

The late great Vance Havner... Many of you don’t know who Vance Havner was. He was a Baptist preacher from North Carolina, full of wisdom. Here’s what he said: “When I see a bird that looks like a duck, quacks like a duck, paddles in water like a duck, and prefers the company of ducks, I conclude it must be a duck.” When you see people who live like the world, dress like the world, act like the world, and prefer the company of the world rather than the company of God’s people, they’re of the world. If you love the Lord Jesus Christ, you’re going to love what Jesus loves—and Jesus loves the Church; He loves the brethren. His friends are our friends. “*As he is, so are we in this world*” (1 John 4:17).

#### **E. His Enemies Are Our Enemies**

I’ll tell you something else: His enemies are our enemies. There’s no way that you can be a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and not make some enemies. Let me give you a scripture; put it down—John chapter 15, verses 18 through 20: Jesus said, “*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also*



*persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also*” (John 15:18–20).

A man is known by the enemies he has. Every now and then, somebody will say something like this—one of the precious little ladies in our church starts to say, “Pastor Rogers, we love you so much. Everybody loves you.” I say, “Ha ha ha. Everybody doesn’t love me.” And, that doesn’t break my heart. I don’t expect to be loved by everybody, nor should you. We cannot be popular with the world that crucified our Lord. If His friends are our friends, His enemies are our enemies. That doesn’t mean we’re not to love our enemies. Jesus loved His enemies. He prayed for those who crucified Him. I don’t mean that you’re filled with hate and spite, but they are enemies of the cross of Jesus Christ. Paul said, *“I...tell you...weeping, that they are...enemies”* (Philippians 3:18).

#### **F. His Purpose Is Our Purpose**

Next, listen carefully—*“as he is, so are we in this world”* (1 John 4:17)—His purpose is our purpose—His purpose is our purpose. Look, if you will, in the Gospel of John, chapter 20 and verse 21, or at least jot it down on your paper. Listen to it: *“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you”* (John 20:21). His purpose is our purpose. *“As my Father [has] sent me, even so send I you”* (John 20:21).

A year or so ago, I had the privilege of preaching in the White House in the East Room—the National Day of Prayer—and the President was there. And, I couldn’t speak long, but I told a story. I shared this with you shortly after that time, but I want to remind you of it. I had been reading the *Houston Chronicle*, and on the front of the *Houston Chronicle* was an unusual picture. It was a picture of a grown woman who had her ear on the chest of a grown man. And, there was a caption underneath it that told what that was all about. That man had received a heart transplant, and the heart that was beating in his chest was the heart of this woman’s son. And, she was listening by putting her ear to his chest to her son’s heart beating. And, when I read that, I said, “Would to God that He could put His ear on my chest and hear the heartbeat of His Son!”

Friend, I want to tell you something: if God Almighty puts His ear to your chest and Jesus is in there, you’re going to have a heartbeat for missions and for soul winning, because He said, *“As my Father hath sent me...so send I you”* (John 20:21). And, why was He sent? Luke 19:10: *“For the Son of man [has] come to seek and to save that which [is] lost.”* His purpose must be our purpose.

#### **G. His Authority Is Our Authority**

You say, “But, Pastor Rogers, I don’t have what it takes!” What I’m trying to tell you is you do have what it takes, because not only is His purpose our purpose—His authority



is our authority. That's what the Great Commission is all about. Look at Matthew chapter 28—you know that by heart—beginning in verse 18: *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power”—*that is, “all authority”; that's what the word literally means—*“is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore”—*now, catch the “therefore.” See, I have all this authority—*“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing 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”—*and do it all by yourself? No—*“and, lo, I am with you”—*“I am with you,” the One who has this authority—*“I am with you always, even unto the end of the [age]”—*or, “the world” (Matthew 28:18–20).

Did Jesus have authority over the devil? Then, do you have authority over the devil? Yes, that's the whole thing. *“Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4). Remember when I told you in the introduction—that His death had my name on it? When He died, I died with Him. His resurrection had my name on it. When He rose, I rose with Him. His victory had my name on it. When He won the victory, so did I. Therefore, His authority is given to us. And, Jesus said to the 70 when He sent them out, *“I give...you [authority]...over all the power of the enemy”* (Luke 10:19). The devil hopes that we never learn this truth. We don't have to be beat up by this devil. We don't have to take it. *“Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4).

You say, “What about when a Christian gets killed, murdered, martyred?” It doesn't mean the devil has won; it means the devil has lost. That's his blunder. *“They overcame him”—*the devil—*“by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death”* (Revelation 12:11). Satan is not winning; he's losing. We have authority over all the power of the devil. His authority is our authority.

One of Southern Baptist's premier missionaries was Bertha Smith. How many of you remember Bertha Smith? Let me see your hands. About 20% of you. “Miss Bertha,” we used to call her. She spoke in here from this platform—I believe from this platform; I know down at the old church. Don't know how long Miss Bertha's been in the Glory, but I know she's straightened Heaven out since she's been up there. Quite a gal. Miss Bertha told about a Miss Mitchell from California. Miss Mitchell was from Los Angeles, and she went as a missionary to India. She had great glowing ambitions to be a missionary, and when she got over there, she found herself very much unhappy. She went to live, first of all, with an older missionary couple, and she didn't get along with them. She was unhappy in the place where she was put. Number two: She had extreme difficulty with the language. It was difficult for her to learn the Telugu or whatever it was. Number three: She was overcome with being homesick. Number four: She began to loathe the sight of the Indian people. She just did not like them. And then, on top of all of

that, she came down with amoebic dysentery. I mean, it was just everything—five great big problems. She just decided she would come back home and told the mission board she needed to come back home.

But then, she was reading in her devotions from Joshua chapter 10 about a victory that God had given Joshua. And, there were five kings in a cave, and Joshua said to his captains, “Bring those five kings out. Roll the stone away from that cave” (Joshua 10:18), and they had them captured in the cave and brought them out. And then, he said, “Put them down on the ground.” And then, he said to his captains, “You come, and you put your heel on the neck of these kings.” One by one they went down, and one by one the captains came and put their heels on the necks of those kings. And then, here’s what Joshua said in Joshua 10, verse 25: *“And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom [you] fight”* (Joshua 10:25).

When that missionary read these things, she took those five great problems that she had and she wrote them on a piece of paper. She wrote down the fact she didn’t like where she was staying. And then, she wrote down the fact that she was having difficulty with the language. She wrote down the fact that she did not like the Indian people. She wrote down the fact that she was homesick. She wrote down the fact that she had dysentery, and she wrote it down. And then, she put those pieces of paper on the ground, and Miss Bertha said she went and put her heel on each one of them and said, “I claim victory over you. I claim victory over you. I claim victory over you. If Jesus has the victory, I do.” You know what happened? She began to love where she was staying. You know what happened? She got a language teacher, and learned the language, and began to be proficient—loved the Indian people. A young man saw her, fell in love with her, got married, and they became missionaries together and moved out of there. Her body got healed, and she gained the victory by realizing that the authority that Jesus Christ had was her authority, and she began to live in that authority.

#### **H. His Future Is Our Future**

And now, last of all, not only is His authority our authority, but His future is our future. *“As he is, so are we in this world”* (1 John 4:17). Colossians chapter 3 and verse 4—that’s the last scripture I’m going to give you—Colossians 3 and verse 4: *“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory”* (Colossians 3:4). Think about it. Can you imagine being with Jesus in Glory? I mean, is that true or not true? How many of you believe it’s true? I hope you believe it. But, how many of us has that dawned on?

Now, Jesus can come at any moment. He’s going to appear in Glory. And, there we

are—appearing with Jesus in Glory. *“When [Jesus], who is our life, shall appear, then [ye] shall...appear with him in glory”* (Colossians 3:4). Praise God! When we took Jesus as the Heavenly Bridegroom, it was not 'till death do us part, amen? He came to a cradle and a cross. He's coming to a coronation. He became one with us that we might become one with Him. We are identified with Him. Now, this all begins when you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. But, it only continues as you believe and trust Him for it and act on it.

## Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. I'm going to ask you to pray a prayer tonight. Would you pray, “God, help me to understand this truth. Lord, help me to believe it and live by it. Lord, I'm tired of living as a second-class Christian. I'm tired of living beneath my privileges. And Lord, I want that resurrection life. I want, Lord, Your wisdom to be my wisdom. I want Your friends to be my friends, Your enemies to be my enemies. I want Your purpose to be my purpose, and Your authority, my authority. Teach me this truth”?

And, let's pray for just a moment. And, Lord God, I pray for my own heart—that I will not preach beyond what I believe, that, Lord God, I pray that You would help me to live according to what I believe and preach. And Lord, help us all to understand the incredible power that we have because You identified Yourself with us that we might, Lord, be identified with You.

# Our Identification with Christ

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** August 13, 1995

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 John 4:17

*"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment:  
because as he is, so are we in this world."*

1 JOHN 4:17

## Outline

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God's Word. Find, if you will, please, 1 John chapter 4 and verse 17—1 John chapter 4 and verse 17.

Last Sunday morning, I spoke to you about how to live the victorious life, and I gave you three words from Romans chapter 6. Do you remember them? Nod your head if you do. Three words from Romans chapter 6—what's the first word? *Hey*, that's pretty good. *Know*. What's the second word? *Reckon*. What's the third word? *Yield*. That does my old preacher heart real good—that you know, that you could remember, that. What is it that you're to know? That we're crucified with Christ—that when He died, we died with Him. And, we are to know that. Now, that's a fact; we're to know it. And then, you turn that fact to faith, and you what? You reckon on it; you count on it. That's a bookkeeping word. You say, "He died for me; I died with Him. He was buried; I was buried with Him.

He arose; I arose with Him. He ascended; I ascended with Him. He's seated in the heavenlies; I am seated with Him." That's a fact. Then, we begin to count on that fact; we reckon on that fact. And then, the last word is *yield*. And so, when we yield to what we know and what we believe, then, at that moment, sin has no longer dominion over us, and we begin to have the victory that the Lord Jesus Christ wants us to have.

Now, I told you that the thing that you were to know is that when Christ died, you died with Him. That is, you are identified with Him. The identification of a believer with the Lord Jesus Christ is one of the greatest truths he can ever learn. So, I had, on that last Sunday morning, just to blow past some of that, because we only have so much time, and you don't listen extremely fast some mornings. And so, I want, tonight, just to expand on our identification with Christ: what it is we are to know, what it is we are to reckon upon, and what it is we are to yield to.

Now, having that in mind, look, if you will, in 1 John chapter 4 and verse 17: *"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world"* (1 John 4:17). He's not talking about something that's going to happen later on. He's not talking about our being made like Him in the resurrection. *"As He is, so are we"* (1 John 4:17)—not in the sweet by-and-by, but right now, in this present world. A greater truth could not be put in fewer words. In a Christian, Christ lives again, right here on this earth. He is alive and well and living in us. And, there's only one person who has ever lived the Christian life—only one: His name is Jesus. And, if the Christian life is lived at your address, it'll still be Jesus living that life in you and through you. Now, when you understand this truth, it becomes Christmas, and Pentecost, and Easter all wrapped up together. Jesus Christ is in you, and *"as he is, so are we in this world"* (1 John 4:17).

## **I. Identification**

Now, by review, let's just think about His identification with us. You see, Jesus identified Himself with us so we could identify ourselves with Him. For example, look, if you will, in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 21. That is a great verse; I think it's worth turning to. You might check it to make certain that you have it underlined in your Bible. But, it is an incredible verse—2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 21. It has to do with the matter of His identification with us on the cross. Look at it. The Bible says there in verse 21: *"For he hath made him"*—who is that? Jesus—*"For [God] hath made [Jesus] to be sin for us"*—now, that's His identification with us. Jesus was not a sinner, but He identified Himself with our sin. That's the reason Jesus was baptized: to identify Himself with us. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. Jesus had nothing to repent of; but yet, He did it. Jesus, when He was baptized, was baptized to identify Himself with sinful humanity; He was baptized to identify Himself with our sins. We're baptized to identify

ourselves with His righteousness. Do you get it? Now, watch it. Look at it—*“For [God] hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”* (2 Corinthians 5:21). He for us; we in Him—for us; in Him. Do you see it? Look at it again—look at it. Let that verse burst alive in you. He for us; we in Him—that’s identification. We are one with Him because He chose to become one with us. He identified Himself with us.

#### **A. We Are United with Him in His Death**

And, therefore, we are one with Him in death. Romans 5:8: *“God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* Christ died instead of us, but when He died for us, we died with Him. Remember what I told you last Sunday morning? His death had your name on it, and He freed you from the punishment of sin because on the cross He paid your punishment. He freed you from the power of sin because you’re now no longer Satan’s slave, because Satan’s slave died. You died when Jesus died. And, sin has no more dominion over you, and you are free from the slavery that you were sold into by Adam.

I’ve told you before about prairie fire that began. And, some men were out there on the prairie, and they couldn’t outrun the flames because the wind was blowing 30 and 40 miles an hour. And, the burning grass was coming toward these men, and they were afraid they’d be consumed. And, they were out of breath, and one man said, “Wait a minute.” He said, “I know what to do. I know the ways of the prairie.” And so, he stops, took some matches from his pocket, and started a fire at his feet. And, the flames were coming this way, and now the flames were burning that way. And, his friends said, “You fool! We’re surrounded by flames.” He said, “No, I know what I’m doing. Wait a moment.” And, he said, “Step over here now in the burned-off place.” He said, “The fire cannot come where the fire has already been.” It’s a wonderful illustration of Calvary, because when you come to Calvary, you come to a place where the fire of God’s wrath has already been. Do you understand? I mean, God’s wrath fell at Calvary, and the fires of God’s wrath fell on Jesus. And then, you come and stand at Calvary, and identify yourself with Calvary—the fire cannot come where the fire has already been.

When Jesus died for you, you died with the Lord Jesus. And, therefore, now you are free from death’s penalty. He became a Son of man that you might be—we, you, and I might become—sons and daughters of God. He took our sins that we might be called innocent. He became guilty that we might be acquitted. He was filled with despair that we might be filled with joy. He took our shame; we take His glory. He took the pains of Hell that we might have the blessings of Heaven. He for us; we in Him. Now, we’re united with Him in His death.

## **B. We Are United with Him in His Resurrection**

We're also united with the Lord Jesus Christ in His resurrection. That's what baptism is all about. It pictures our being raised with Him—not some day, but now. As the Apostle Paul said, knowing the power of His resurrection—Romans 6, verse 4: *“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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection”* (Romans 5:4–5). Baptism is the likeness of His death. Baptism is the likeness of His resurrection, symbolizing that we have a new life. I died with Him. I rose with Him. He has a life that the grave could not hold, and I have a life just like that. I have, now, a supernatural life. Christians are not just nice people; they're new creatures. They have been raised from the dead. They have resurrection life. We're united with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death. We're united with the Lord Jesus Christ in His resurrection.

## **C. We Are United with Him in His Ascension and His Enthronement**

We're also united with the Lord Jesus Christ in His ascension and His enthronement. Take the Book of Ephesians, this time, and turn to Ephesians chapter 1. The Apostle Paul wanted the Ephesian church to be a great church, so he prayed a prayer for this church that you ought to learn to pray for your children, pray for yourself, pray for your husband, pray for your wife, and pray for your pastor. Here's what Paul said in verse 15—this is Ephesians 1, verse 15: *“Whereof I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love [for] all...saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers”*—now, would you like to eavesdrop on the prayer of the greatest Christian who ever lived and see what he prayed for the Church? Well, here's what it is—*“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him”*—oh friend, to have wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus! No greater blessing could you have. And then, he goes on to explain what that wisdom and knowledge of revelation is—*“[That] the eyes of your understanding being enlightened”*—not the eyes of your physical eyes, but the eyes of your understanding—*“that ye may know what is the hope of his calling”*—and the word *hope* means “absolute certainty,” not *maybe* so. In the Bible, *hope* doesn't mean it the way we use it today. It means “rock-ribbed assurance based on the Word of God.” That's the reason that the Second Coming of Jesus is called “the blessed hope”—*“that [you might] know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints”*—he's not talking about what you're going to get; he's talking about what He got in you, His inheritance in you. You are His treasure—*“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward”*—most of us don't hear that;



we don't understand that. Paul says, "O God, give them wisdom. O God, give them understanding. Give them revelation. Open their eyes that they might understand—"the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in [the world] that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:15–23).

You say, "Well, I'm glad that happened to Jesus. Jesus rose. Jesus is up there in the Glory, and everything is beneath His feet. And, He is—He has—power over everything that can possibly come. Everything is beneath His feet. That's wonderful that that happened to Jesus."

But now, look in chapter 2, verse 6, if you will. Let's begin in verse 4: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us"—look at it—"together with Christ"—do you see it? That means He made us alive together with Christ—"(*by grace [are] ye...saved;*)"—you didn't have anything to do with it. It's all God's grace, all His wonderful love. Now, watch it—"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4–6).

Now, where is Christ Jesus now? Seated in the heavenlies! Where are you? You say, "Seated in Bellevue." No, you're seated in the heavenlies. You are raised. You're seated with Jesus up there. You say, "I don't understand it." Well, Paul said, "Lord, open their eyes. Lord, help them to see it. O God, help them to know that incredible power—that they have resurrection power in the Lord Jesus Christ." Now, you're not only in Bellevue; you're in Christ, right? You are in Christ. Look, if you will, in Ephesians chapter 1, verse 1: "*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ*" (Ephesians 1:1). So, you're the saints at Memphis in Christ. You're in Christ—you are in Christ. You are part of the mystical Body of Christ. So, what is true about Christ is true about you, right?

Now, let me illustrate. Suppose I put you in a barrel—it's a good idea—and put that barrel in the Mississippi. Now, you're in the barrel, and the barrel's in the Mississippi. Where are you? You're in the Mississippi, because you're in the barrel, and the barrel is in the Mississippi. You're in Christ, and Christ is seated in heavenly places. Where are you? You are seated in heavenly places with Christ. I'm talking about in the spirit realm.

You see, we are identified with the Lord Jesus. "*As he is, so are we*"—"as he is, so are we" (1 John 4:17). That is our identification with Christ. We died with Him. We were buried with Him. We rose with Him. We ascended with Him. We are united with Him in

victory. That's the reason we sing it, as we sang it so wonderfully this morning: "Oh, Victory in Jesus!" We have overcome spiritually because He has overcome spiritually. We already have the victory. We don't pray for the victory. We pray from the victory. The victory has been won by Jesus at Calvary. Now, that's the first part of our text.

## II. Appropriation

Go back and look at our text again now. Go back to 1 John 4, verse 17, and look at it again—now, look at it again: *"because as he is, so are we"* (1 John 4:17). Now, the first part is identification—*"as he is"* (1 John 4:17). The second part is appropriation—*"so are we"*—*"so are we"* (1 John 4:17). What does that mean to you in a very practical way today—*"as he is, so are we in this world"* (1 John 4:17)? Now, notice it's in this world that we're to be like Him. What does that mean—*"as he is, so are we"* (1 John 4:17)?

### A. His Wisdom Is Our Wisdom

Well, first of all, it means that His wisdom now is our wisdom. Turn with me to John chapter 16 for a moment. Just turn to it. Lick your fingers, and turn. Let your fingers do the walking through the sacred pages here, and look with me here in John—the Gospel of John—chapter 16, and see how you and I are to have wisdom. Look, if you will, in verse 12: Jesus said, *"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into [a little bit of] truth"*—what my Bible says is, *"He shall guide you into all truth"*—*"[and] he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. And all things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and...shew it unto you"* (John 16:12–15).

Now, *"as he is, so are [you] in this world"* (1 John 4:17). As He had the wisdom from the Father, you're to have wisdom from the Father. He has sent you the Holy Spirit to put His life into you. And so, you're not to be like a ship without a rudder and without a compass on a dark and starless night; the Holy Spirit of God is to guide you. And, therefore, if you need wisdom, you can ask God for wisdom and expect to have it. James says, *"If any [man] lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it"*—what?—*"shall be given [it]. [Only] let him ask in faith...For he that [doubteth] is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed... A double minded man is unstable in all [of] his ways"* (James 1:5–8)—*"let not that man think...he shall receive any thing of the Lord"* (James 1:7). But, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 that Christ *"is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"* (1 Corinthians 1:30). Now, that wisdom can be yours, but if you don't call upon it, if you don't claim it, you'll never experience that wisdom.

Years ago, I read about a man who made a fortune as a gold miner out west. He became enormously rich. He left his gold mines out west, and moved to New York City. He had a son. He wanted his son to be educated. The son wanted to follow in his father's footsteps, so he sent his son to one of the great universities. And, the son studied mineralogy, and he studied mining and engineering. He got a diploma. He said, "Dad, I want to go to work for you now." He said, "Give me one of your best mines—one of your finest gold mines—and I'll show you how to make it work. I've been to school. We've learned a lot of things, Dad, that you didn't know." His dad said, "Well, Son, I really want you to work for me, but," he said, "you know, you've not had any practical experience." He said, "Son, before I turn one of my very best gold mines over to you," he said, "I think you ought to put on some overalls. I think you ought to go down into the belly of that mine and work for a while, and see things, and get some hands-on experience." He said, "No, Dad," he said, "I know what I'm doing. Just turn over one of these mines to me," and he put his diploma on his daddy's desk as proof that he really knew what he was doing.

So, he shoved that diploma at his dad, and his dad said, "All right, Son." And, his dad gave him a mine—one of the finest gold mines, but it backed up against a lake, and it was a little dangerous. It had to be shored up a particular way. This boy went to that mine, and he fired all of the people that were working there and hired some of his college friends, young Turks who knew all about it. And, he fired the superintendent and others. One day, he wired his father back, and he said, "Dad, I've got some problems with this mine here. The lake is seeping in." He said, "I'm afraid we need to shore it up a little differently. What do you suggest?" And, the dad didn't answer. After a while, he wired back again. He said, "The situation is getting dangerous." He said, "I think we need to make some changes in this mine. What do you suggest?" The dad didn't answer. He sent the third wire. He said, "If you don't tell me what to do, we're going to lose that mine." His dad wired back and said, "Stick your diploma in that hole."

Sometimes we think we know how to handle a situation. We say, "God, you know, I don't need Your wisdom." But, you see, God has wisdom for us. And, we sometimes, with our own learning and our own native ability and our own smartness, we think we don't need God. But friend, we can claim His wisdom.

Is there a problem that you're facing right now and you don't know what to do with it? Get your heart clean. Confess every known sin. Make sure that your motives are clear. Pray and ask God for wisdom. Thank God for the wisdom that He gives you, and believe that your decision will be led by the Holy Spirit of God. His wisdom is our wisdom. "*As he is, so are we*" (1 John 4:17).

## B. His Joy Is Our Joy

His joy is to be our joy. You're in John 16, and you were there. Turn to John 15 and verse 11—look at it: Jesus said, *“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full”* (John 15:11). Why would your joy be full? Because your joy is now my joy because my joy is your joy and my joy is in you. I can't say that again, but it's all perfectly logical.

Now, listen—listen: Jesus said that not “joy like Mine,” but *“that my joy”* (John 15:11). The joy that the Lord Jesus Christ...was supernatural. If it's His joy... John says, *“As he is, so are we”* (1 John 4:17). We are to have the joy that the Lord Jesus Christ has. His joy is to be our joy. We're not talking about kicks. We're not talking about fun. We're talking about joy—*“joy unspeakable and full of glory”* (1 Peter 1:8). And, it's your legacy. Jesus said, “I have spoken this to you, that My joy might remain in you” (John 15:11). Think about His joy. The Bible says, *“God...hath anointed [him] with the oil of gladness above [his] fellows”* (Hebrews 1:9). No joy ever like the Lord Jesus—and that joy is yours. *“As he is, so are we in this world”* (1 John 4:17).

## C. His Sorrows Are Our Sorrows

His sorrow will be your sorrow. You see, Jesus was a man of sorrows. The Apostle Paul prayed in Philippians 3: “Not only may I know the power of His resurrection, but,” he also said, “I want to know the fellowship of His sufferings” (Philippians 3:10). You see, “as he is, so are we” (1 John 4:17). Don't get the idea that because you're identified with Christ, your troubles are over. I've told you before, *Jesus Christ did not come to get you out of trouble; He came to get into trouble with you.* And, as His wisdom is your wisdom, His joy is your joy, His sorrow is your sorrow. And, Jesus will never be nearer to you than when the things that break His heart break your heart. You want Jesus to be real to you? Then, begin to weep over this Hell-bent world. Someone preached a sermon one time on a dry-eyed church in a Hell-bent world. When's the last time you shed a tear for some soul that was mortgaged to the devil? Jesus is weeping for this lost world. Jesus is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and *“as he is, so are we”* (1 John 4:17). His sorrows are our sorrows.

## D. His Friends Are Our Friends

I want to say this: His friends are our friends. I love this passage in Matthew chapter 25 and verse 40: Jesus said, *“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me”* (Matthew 25:40). That is, “These are My friends. When you love My friends, you are loving Me, for as I am, so are you in this world.” By the way, if you don't enjoy being with brothers and sisters in Christ, I think there are certain conclusions that are in order. *The late, great Dr. Vance Havner said this: he said, “When I see a bird that looks like a duck, quacks like a duck, paddles in the water*

like a duck, and prefers the company of ducks, I conclude that it must be a duck.” And, if you just love this world, you look like this world, and you prefer the company of the people of this world, I doubt that you know the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, you see, Jesus said, *“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of one of these my brethren, [you’ve] done it unto me”* (Matthew 25:40). Thank God for the blessings of Christian friends. Joyce and I, as we have traveled at home and abroad from church to church, we have marveled at what a wonderful body of believers and friends we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. His friends are our friends.

#### **E. His Enemies Are Our Enemies**

I want to tell you something else: *“as he is, so are we”* (1 John 4:17)—His enemies are our enemies. Do you think that when you come to Jesus, you won’t have any enemies? Friend, you’re going to get some enemies. Go back again to John chapter 15, and look, if you will now, in verse 18—John chapter 15, verse 18: *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you”*—*“As he is, so are we in this world”* (1 John 4:17). Look at it—*“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you”* (John 15:18–19). His friends are my friends, and His enemies are my enemies. The world that hates Jesus is going to hate me.

And, it’s absolutely impossible that you can live this risen, victorious life with the Lord Jesus Christ and still have this world pander at your feet and be popular with the world that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible clearly and plainly says, *“[Beware] when all men...speak well of you!”* (Luke 6:26). And, I can tell you, I’ve lived on this road long enough, I’ve preached the gospel long enough, to know that every time I preach I make an enemy—every time. Someone does not like what I say if I preach what the Bible says about the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot be a friend to this world—you cannot be a friend of this world—and live the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus Christ. If the world hated Him, it’ll hate you. The servant is not better than his master (Matthew 10:24).

#### **F. His Purpose Is Our Purpose**

So, His sorrows are my sorrows. His joys are my joys. His wisdom is my wisdom. His friends are my friends. His enemies are my enemies. *“As he is, so am I”* (1 John 4:17). And, I want to say this: His purpose must be my purpose. And, what is His purpose? The Great Commission. And, you read there in John chapter 20 and verse 21: Jesus said, *“As my Father hath sent me”—what?—“even so send I you”* (John 20:21). *“My purpose is your purpose. I am in you; you are in Me. I died for you; you died with Me. I rose for you; you rose with Me. I ascended for you; you ascended with Me. I’m seated in the heavenlies; you’re seated in the heavenlies. As I am, so are you in this world. Our lives now are melded together. And, I am living in you; you’re crucified with Me.”*



*“Nevertheless [you] live...not [you], but Christ [that lives] in [you]” (Galatians 2:20). Our purpose is to win the lost at any cost.* That’s the reason this Fall we’re going to be emphasizing “Making Friends Forever”—bringing friends, people, to Jesus Christ.

### **G. His Authority Is Our Authority**

“Well,” you say, “Pastor, that’s a big order. I don’t have what it takes.” Precisely—precisely. So, not only is His purpose your purpose, but His authority is your authority. That’s the reason, when He gave the Great Commission in Matthew 28, verses 18 and following, He said, *“All [authority] is given unto me... Go ye therefore...and, lo, [I’m] with you”* (Matthew 28:28–20). *“As he is, so are we”* (1 John 4:17). We have authority over the devil.

You know, the great question is not, are you afraid of the devil? The great question is, is the devil afraid of you? I mean, the demons quake at Jesus; they tremble. *“As he is, so are we in this world”* (1 John 4:17). Satan hopes you never learn what Jesus said when He said, “Behold, I give authority over all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19). *“Greater is he [that’s] in you, than he [that’s] in the world”* (1 John 4:4). And, we need to learn to practice that authority. *“As he is, so are we in this world”* (1 John 4:17).

### **H. His Future Is Our Future**

I want to say one last thing: not only is His authority our authority, but His future is our future. Thank God! I mean, we’re united with Him all the way. The Bible says in Colossians chapter 3, verse 4: *“When Christ, who is our life”—now, just think of that phrase: “Christ, who is our life”—not “Christ that we’ve heard about,” but “Christ, who is our life”—“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory”* (Colossians 3:4). We’re identified with Him all the way. I tell you, when He comes again, folks—when He comes in glory—you’re going to be made glorious just like Him. This is not a love story that says, “To death do us part,” because death can’t do us part. *“[Nothing can] separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:39). He came to a cradle; He died on a cross. And, soon—and very soon—He’s coming to a coronation. And, when He appears in glory, we’re going to appear with Him.

## **Conclusion**

Now, let me see if I can put it in a sentence—listen to it: He gave Himself for me that He might give Himself to me, that He might express Himself through me. And, that’s it. Do you have it? He gave Himself for me that He might give Himself to me, that He might live His life through me. *“As he is, so are we in this world”* (1 John 4:17). Now, that’s good news.

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Father, thank You for Your Word. Lord, what a

blessing it is tonight to know that we are identified with You because You identified Yourself with us, that You became the Son of man that we might become sons and daughters of God, that You were born of a virgin that we might be born again, that You came to earth that we might go to Heaven, that You took our Hell that we might take Your Heaven. Thank You, Jesus.

Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I wonder how many here tonight would say, “Pastor Rogers, Jesus has saved me, and I know that He’s saved me—and I thank God for that. And, by His grace, and through the sweet Holy Spirit, and on the authority of the Word of God, I have the assurance that I’m saved. And, I know if I died tonight, by God’s grace, I’d go to Heaven.” If you can give me that testimony, would you just slip up your hand and hold it up a moment? Thank you. Take it down.

Now, if you couldn’t lift your hand, let me help you to get it settled tonight. Let me lead you in a prayer. And, in this prayer, tonight, you can receive Christ right where you are. Now, He identified Himself with you when He died for you. You identify yourself with Him when you trust Him, when you take Him now as your personal Lord and Savior. Pray a prayer like this: “Lord Jesus”—just speak to Him—“Lord Jesus, thank You for dying for me. Thank You that You took my Hell. Thank You that You took my sin. Thank You, Jesus, that You took my shame. Thank You, Jesus, that You took my suffering. Thank You, Lord Jesus, that You took my place on that cross—that when You died, You died for me. And now, Lord Jesus, I receive You now tonight, this moment, right now, right where I am, right now, forever, for eternity. Now, I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart, and save me, Lord Jesus”—pray that from your heart—“Come into my heart, Lord Jesus, and save me.”

Did you ask Him? Did you? Then, pray this way: “Thank You for doing it, Lord. Thank You for saving me. O Lord Jesus, thank You for coming in. I don’t ask for a sign. I don’t look for a feeling. I just stand on Your Word. Thank You for doing it. And now, Lord Jesus, because You died for me, I’ll live for You. I’m done with the old way; I’ve become a new creature. I turn my back on sin, and I yield myself up to You. Live Your life through me, Lord Jesus, and help me never to be ashamed of You, because You died for me. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer tonight, I thank God for it, if you were sincere. And, one of the ways that you can show that you’re truly sincere is that you’ll make it public. Every true Christian has a desire to make public that he knows Jesus. He wants the brothers and sisters to know that he’s a brother or that she’s a sister. And so, they want to identify themselves with His Church, with His Body, openly and publicly. And, that’s why we ask you to come forward; that’s why we ask you not to be ashamed if you prayed and asked Christ into your heart. The Bible says, “*Let the redeemed of the LORD say so*” (Psalm 107:2). And so, tonight, if you prayed and asked



Christ to come into your heart, what you need to do is to make it public.

And, let us make an appointment for your baptism and baptize you as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ so you can be added to His Body and the fellowship of His Church. Now, you're added to His Body when you get saved, but you enter into the baptized fellowship of the Church when you follow Him in obedience in believer's baptism. And, that's so important—it's so important.

So, I'm going to ask you tonight, if you prayed that prayer and said, "Jesus, come into my heart, and save me," I'm going to ask you, when we stand and sing in a moment, just to make your way down one of these aisles, and tell the minister standing there, "I am trusting Jesus." We want to give you some scripture, answer any questions you may have, and seal your decision in prayer. Don't wait to see what any one else is going to do. You come if no one else comes. Do what Jesus would have you do. Don't look around to see. Don't let Satan intimidate you. Just step out and come. You prayed that prayer? As soon as we begin to sing, just make your way to the aisle and right down here to the front.

Now, there may be others of you tonight that have been saved and baptized, and your membership is elsewhere. You'd like to place your membership here. You'd like to be a part of the Bellevue family of faith. And, I want to welcome you and invite you to do that. Now, we're not looking for just joiners, but we're looking for people who want to be growing disciples of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, we don't ask that you be perfect—none of us are perfect—but we ask that you be sincere, that you want to be a growing Christian. If you do, I want to invite you to leave your seat and come and tell the minister that you'd like to place your membership here.

So, some are coming, saying, "I'm trusting Christ." Others are coming, saying, "I want to place my membership here." Be in a spirit of prayer. If you're with a friend that needs to make a decision, you might volunteer to come forward with your friend. How beautiful to see one friend bring another friend to Jesus!

Let's stand together as we sing.

# Why I Believe in Jesus

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 3, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 5**

*“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”*

1 JOHN 5:13

## Outline

Introduction

- I. I Believe in Jesus for Historical Reasons
- II. I Believe in Jesus for Biblical Reasons
- III. I Believe in Jesus for Spiritual Reasons
- IV. I Believe in Jesus for Personal Reasons

Conclusion

## Introduction

I had the joy of preaching in Red Square. But I think perhaps the greatest thrill that I had was to preach in the Red Army theater, the magnificent theater there that was attended, so I'm told, by Stalin, attended by Lenin. It's a place where they glorify and magnify the past, the glories of communism, the powers of that Red Army as it tried to enforce totalitarianism, atheism, around the world. And on this particular night, I had the joy and the privilege of preaching there. And the theater was filled with, this time, soldiers, army officers in their uniforms, who, just months ago, had been serving a godless, atheistic, communistic, totalitarian regime. And I had to almost pinch myself to say, "What are you doing here, Adrian Rogers, in this place, the Word of God to preach?"

Had to ask myself this question: "Adrian, what are you going to preach? What are you going to say to these people? What are you going to do with this opportunity that God has given you? What shall be your subject matter?" You know, there are many places, many ways, many thoughts. But I thought that I would share with them what I'm going to share with you this morning. I'm going to share with you what I shared with them. I have talked to them on this subject: "Why I Believe in Jesus"—"Why I Believe in Jesus."

You remember the Lord Jesus Christ had fed 5,000, and then He began to talk to His disciples about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and many of them left them.

Jesus turned to Simon Peter, and said, “Will you also go away?” And he said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life.”

And friend, indeed, Jesus is the only answer to this world’s problems. And I’m going to tell you in a way what I told them. Of course, I cannot remember every syllable and every sentence and every thought. But I know what was in my heart then, and I know what is in my heart now, and that’s what I want to share with you.

And I asked them, “Where are you going to go? You young soldiers, where will you turn? Will you continue in atheism? Will you continue to say there is no God? For if you do, you must say, in the beginning the heavens and the earth created themselves, and then in turn created man and all that there is.” Oh, dear friend, the follies of atheism are so real. To be an atheist is not a sign of intelligence.

I pointed out to these young men, as I have pointed out to you, that in the world’s greatest minds there has been a belief in God. Socrates believed in God. Bacon believed in God. Einstein believed in God. Galileo believed in God. Newton believed in God. Werner von Braun believed in God. Not a sign of intelligence to say there is no God. And I asked these men, “Where shall you go? Will you go to atheism?”

Then I asked them another question: “Will you go to philosophy?” And I pointed out that all of the philosophers, by and large, are philosophers of despair. Schopenhauer said, “Life is a curse of endless cravings and endless desires.” Huxley said, as he looked at everything and he looked at mankind, he said, “it seems that we are but a cancer on the globe.” That infidel Bertrand Russell said, after all of his philosophy, “Philosophy proved a washout to me.” Shall we go to Philosophy? Where shall you go? To whom shall we turn?

Then I asked, “Are you going to turn to the false religions of this world? Are you going to turn to some of the ideologies, religious ideologies?” I pointed out to them something I want to point out to you. Confucius was a teacher, but Confucius died, and he is dead. Buddha was a teacher, but Buddha died, and he’s dead. Mohammed was a teacher. Mohammed died, and he is dead. But Jesus died, and He arose again. Friend, there is no sense following a loser. Thank God, our Saviour is alive.

And I pointed out to them, as I point out to you, that you can take Mohammed out of Islam, and still have Islam. You can take Confucius out of Confucianism, and still have Confucianism. You can take Buddha out of Buddhism, and still have Buddhism. But you cannot take Jesus out of Christianity. *Christianity is not a code, or a creed, or a church. It is Christ.* It is vital relationship with Jesus Christ. And Jesus alone has satisfied the hunger of man’s heart. And Jesus alone is God’s answer to man’s sin. Jesus alone, dear friend, gives meaning to life and death. He takes the pain out of parting, the strength out of sin, the gloom out of the grave. Jesus is the only one that has an answer to this world’s hunger and this world’s heartache.

But the question comes, “Why, Mr. Rogers, do you believe in Jesus? And why should I believe in Jesus?” Good question. And I gave them four reasons that I gave want to give you today. “Why I believe in Jesus Christ.”

## **I. I Believe in Jesus for Historical Reasons**

Reason number one is the historical reason. I believe in Jesus Christ because Jesus is a bona fide personage in history. Only ignorance scoffs at the idea that Jesus Christ ever lived. More evidence that Jesus Christ is a historical person than Julius Caesar. The very fact that we’re here, the very fact of the Christian church, all of it, the attestation, proves beyond the shadow of any doubt, or cavil, of any peradventure, that Jesus Christ is a historical personage.

H. G. Wells, the noted historian, listed the 10 greatest men of history, and number one on the list was Jesus Christ. But I pointed out to these soldiers in the Red Army theater what I’m going to point out to you: that Jesus Christ does not belong on that list of the 10 greatest men of history. He doesn’t belong on anybody’s list. He is not Jesus the Great. You can talk of Peter the Great. You can talk of Catherine the Great. You can talk of Alexander the Great. But you cannot speak of Jesus the Great. My friend, He is Jesus the One and Only. He is in a category all by Himself.

But nonetheless, when H. G. Wells was talking of historical personages, number one on the list was Jesus Christ. Christ is a fact, a stubborn fact of history. You must face that the man Jesus Christ walked and talked in Galilee, in Judah. He was a very real person. And I believe in Jesus Christ for historical reasons.

I developed that a little more than I will have time to develop it this morning with you, but I want to give you the second reason that I believe in Jesus Christ. Not only for historical reasons, but I believe in Jesus Christ for biblical reasons. The Bible presents Jesus Christ. The story of the Bible is the story of Jesus. From Genesis to Revelation, the hero of the Bible is Jesus Christ, and the message of the Bible is “Jesus saves.” And if you read the Bible and you don’t find the story of Jesus, and learn the message of Jesus somehow, somewhere, you have misread the Bible. Jesus said, “Search the scriptures, for these are they which do testify of me.” Jesus Christ, when He was walking the shores of Galilee, was quoting the Bible. He believed the Bible.

And the Bible that He believed was the Bible that testified of Himself. And on one occasion, Jesus showed two people in all of the Scriptures the things of Himself. I wish I had a tape recording of that message that Jesus gave on the road to Emmaus.

But then the question comes, “Yes, Mr. Rogers, the Bible presents Jesus Christ. Yes, we will admit that, but how do we know the Bible is accurate? Oh, we know there was a historical person called Jesus. And yes, we know that there is a Bible, there is a book—that’s obvious. You have the Bible in your hand. And yes, we will admit that the

Bible does present Jesus Christ.

But how do we know that what the Bible says about Jesus Christ is true?”

My dear friend, I want to tell you that the Bible itself has its own authenticity. The Bible itself has its own ramifications. How do I know that the Bible is the Word of God?

Here’s a book; not one book, really, 66 books—39 in the Old Testament, 27 in the New Testament—written by about 40 different authors, written over a period of 1,500 years, written in at least three different languages, and yet we have it together, bound in leather. And it is one book.

How do we know that this book is the Word of God? Very quickly, I gave them some reasons that I don’t have time to develop with you this morning. But let me tell you I know the Bible is the Word of God because of its marvelous accuracy. I know the Bible is the Word of God because of its fulfilled prophecy. I know that the Bible is the Word of God because of its incredible unity. I know that the Bible is the Word of God, my dear friend, because of its longevity. This book has been hated, spurned, outlawed, burned, decimated. There have been times in Scottish history when to own a Bible was a crime worthy of death. Men have done all that they could do to destroy and obliterate this book. And there it stands, because “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.”

Then there’s the incredible power of the Word of God. I’ve been studying this book seriously for over 45 years, and my dear friend, I’m not finding hidden flaws; I’m finding hidden beauties. The Bible is different from any other kind of book. It has power. We read other books. This book reads us. “The word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword.”

And I went through this litany of reasons that I believe that the Bible is the Word of God. And my dear friend, you do not have to feel that you are a second-class citizen intellectually to say, “I believe the Bible is the Word of God.” There are proofs that the Bible is the Word of God, and this book, God’s Word, presents God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **II. I Believe in Jesus for Biblical Reasons**

And so why do I believe in Jesus Christ? I believe in Jesus Christ, number one, for historical reasons. I believe in Jesus Christ, number two, for biblical reasons. Oh what a person is presented in this book! Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, the God-man, all God and all man in one person. Not demigod, not half God and half man, not all man and no God, not all God and no man, but the God-man, God and man in one person, the virgin-born, sinless Son of God: that’s the Christ that this book presents. Absolutely, totally unique in his birth; absolutely, totally unique in his light—never a life like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ could face his enemies and say, “Which of you convicts me of sin?” I wouldn’t even say that to these two fellows over here that are my friends. But Jesus said, “Which of you convinces me, or convicts me, of sin?” When you think of the life of the Lord Jesus, it’s incredible, the Lord Jesus never modified or took back anything that He ever said. Many times I’ve said some things I’ve said, “Oh, I wish I hadn’t said that.” Many things are opened by mistake, but none as frequently as the mouth.

But Jesus never modified a statement. Jesus never apologized for anything He ever did. It’s not that people didn’t take umbrage with him. It’s not that people were always in agreement with him. But Jesus never once apologized. Jesus Christ never asked for advice. Jesus went in and out among the doctors of the law, from a child up. Jesus Christ rubbed soldiers with the intelligentsia, but never once did Jesus Christ ever ask for advice. Moses had 70 elders that gave him advice. Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived, asked for advice. But not one time did Jesus Christ ever explain why He did what He did. I mean, there are times when they couldn’t understand Him. There is a storm. Jesus is in the boat and He is asleep. He doesn’t explain that. Lazarus is dying, and Jesus stays away.

My dear friend, Jesus was absolutely, totally unique. He never asked for prayer for Himself. That’s incredible. Oh, he told the disciples, “Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” He asked them to stay there in prayer, but He was the only one who was self-sufficient in Himself, completely, as He depended upon the Father.

The Lord Jesus Christ was the only man who chose to die. You say, “All people have the opportunity to choose to die.” You say, “I could commit suicide, or I could die for my country.” Oh no, my dear friend, you’re going to die; you’re not going to choose to die. The only thing you might have some choice about is how soon or how quick you’re going to die. That’s all. You’re going to die. Unless Jesus comes first. But Jesus, being sinless, did not have the sentence of death upon Him, and therefore Jesus could say, “No man taketh my life from me. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.”

Jesus—absolutely, totally unique in this world. Never a man spake like the Lord Jesus. Never a man lived like the Lord Jesus. Never a man was born like the Lord Jesus. Never a man died like the Lord Jesus. But oh, my dear friend, He was shown to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.

As I have told you before, that Jesus is unique not only in His death and burial, but in His resurrection.

We had the incredible privilege at the Orthodox Easter to go past the tomb of Lenin. Lenin is there in that tomb. His body in a glass case. You can walk past. There he is. Those hands, lying out there with the stain of the blood of millions. There he is. I walked past on Easter morning, and I looked at him. And I came out of that tomb, and I looked

up there in Red Square, and there was a poster up there as big as the entire area up over the choir. 40 feet wide and 40 feet tall. And do you know what it said? Oh, hallelujah—do you know what it said? Oh, my friend, it said, *Khristos Voskrese!* Jesus Christ is risen! He is risen! In Red Square. Lenin is dead. Buddha is dead. Mohammed is dead. Jesus is alive. And the Bible presents that kind of a Christ.

### **III. I Believe in Jesus for Spiritual Reasons**

I believe in Him, my dear friend, for historical reasons. I believe in Jesus Christ for biblical reasons. I'll tell you the third reason I believe in Jesus Christ. I believe in Jesus Christ for spiritual reasons. You say, what do you mean, for spiritual reasons? Well, you see, my dear friend, I am not here just to give you an argument. Anything that I can talk you into somebody else can talk you out of. I can teach you about history, and I can teach you about theology, but only the Holy Spirit can truly teach you about Jesus Christ. Jesus has sent His Spirit into the world. And the Holy Spirit has come with this ministry.

Jesus said, "He shall not speak of himself, but he shall testify of me." And you see, it is the Holy Spirit of God that helps us to understand. When you go home, read 1 John chapter 5. And the Bible there in 1 John chapter 5 speaks of the Holy Spirit of God that tells us about Jesus. And then the grand apostle John said, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater."

What does it mean? We all trust men. We all live by faith and trust other people. You go and sit down at a meal today, you eat that meal, that's an act of faith. It's an act of faith. When we went to Helsinki, we got on Aeroflot and flew to Moscow. That was an act of faith. You live by faith. You get in an airplane, you get on a ship, you go to a doctor. My physician is here. He sometimes prescribes things for me, and I get from his hand and from the hand of the pharmacist certain things to take into my body. I don't know the ingredients. It's just an act of faith.

Now what is the Bible saying? "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." You see, friend, the Holy Spirit of God enables you to believe. The Holy Spirit of God, first of all, witnesses to you. When the apostle was preaching there early in the book of Acts, he stood up and said, "We are witnesses of these things. And so is also the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey him."

You see, when I preach, friend, I don't come out here just to give a talk. Before I leave my office on Sunday morning, I get on my knees and say, "O God, O God, you've got to make it real." Not just power of persuasion, it's not just logic. It is Christ the Holy Spirit. "We are witnesses of these things. And so is also the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey Him." And every preacher is dependent upon when he lifts up the Word of God and preaches the Christ of God that the Holy Spirit of God will say,



“Yes, that’s true—yes, that’s true.” The Holy Spirit of God says *amen* to your heart.

You see, dear friend, there are spiritual reasons for believing in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit of God takes the Word of God and says, “That is true.” Once you receive Christ, then the Bible says, “He that hath the son hath the witness in himself.” On the inside, Christ is real. He witnesses to me, and then he witnesses in me, so he can witness through me.

Now how does he witness in me? Why, there is that assurance we preached last week, or the week before last, that we belong to Jesus Christ. I told those soldiers there in Red Army theater, if I had just eaten a piece of pie and had enjoyed it, and somebody came to me and said there is no such thing as pie; or he says to me, if there is pie, it doesn’t taste good, well, that’s not going to disturb me, because I’ve got the witness in myself. Amen? See, I have the internal witness. And a Christian with an experience is never at the mercy of an infidel with an argument, because you have the witness in yourself. The Spirit of God tells me who Jesus Christ is. Jesus has sent His witness into this world. That’s why I believe in Jesus Christ.

And then I gave them the fourth reason that I believe in Jesus Christ. And I want to give you the fourth reason why I believe in Jesus Christ. Now remember that we believe in Christ for historical reasons. He is a historical person. It’s one’s own ignorance that scoffs at the fact that Jesus Christ walked the shores of Galilee. We believe in Jesus Christ for biblical reasons. The Bible presents Jesus Christ as the most unique individual that that ever lived. And remember, the Bible has it’s own authenticity. Then thirdly, we believe in Jesus Christ because of spiritual reasons. The Holy Spirit of God takes these things and He says to our hearts this is truth.

Therefore let me say before I go on to the next reason, Don’t ever say, “Well, it wasn’t my fault; I couldn’t believe. Oh no, my dear friend, there’s not anybody here but what can believe if you want to believe. Jesus never did say, “You cannot come unto me.” He said, “Ye will not come unto me that you might have life.” If you want to believe, you can believe, because God will enable you to believe. If you choose to do what is right, God will give you faith. “For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works.” What is the gift of God? The salvation and the faith is the gift of God. God gives you faith.

#### **IV. I Believe in Jesus for Personal Reasons**

Now here’s the fourth and final reason that I believe in Jesus Christ. Not only, dear friend, for historical reasons, not only for biblical reasons, not only for spiritual reasons, but for personal reasons. Personal reasons—personal reasons.

You say, “What do you mean, personal reasons?” Well, first of all, the best people I know believe in Jesus Christ. The kindest, most loving, most considerate, most gentle,

most sacrificing people I know believe in Jesus Christ.

You say, “Well, I know some hypocrites in the church.” Well, so do I. Friend, you couldn’t be a pastor as long as I’ve been a pastor without knowing some hypocrites. They don’t bother me. For every hypocrite you show me, I can show you hundreds of Bible-believing, God-fearing, loving people who believe in Jesus Christ. These are the greatest people on the face of this earth. I love them and they love me. And I have watched them, and I know them, and I know the grace of God in the hearts and lives of those people.

Oh, my dear friend, not only for what Jesus Christ has done in the hearts and lives of other people, but I believe in Him because of what He has done in my own heart, in my own life. As a teenage boy, I didn’t know what I am preaching this morning. As a teenage boy, I could not have given you the rationale. I could not have given you logically the arguments that I have given you this morning. But as a teenage boy, a boy in trouble, a boy that had been skipping school, a boy that had been cheating in school, lying, getting in fistfights, disobeying and disappointing his parents, as a teenage boy, I prayed one night and asked Jesus to come into my heart. I’d already joined the church. I don’t know whether I was saved at that time or not. I think I may have been, but I was on a spiritual roller coaster. I didn’t have enough theology; I didn’t have enough understanding to keep me going. But finally one day I had had enough. And I stopped on the corner of 39th Street and Calvin Avenue in West Palm Beach after I had walked my girlfriend, who is now my wife, walked her home.

And I stopped and I looked up into the sky, not irreverently, but I just simply looked up in heaven, and as I remember, I lifted my hands, and I said, “O God, I don’t know whether I’m lost and the Holy Spirit has me under conviction, or whether I’m saved and the devil is trying to make me doubt it, but God, I need you and I need peace. And once and for all, and now and forever, as much as in me is, with every inch and every ounce, I give you my heart, and I trust you to save me. And a river of peace began to flow in my heart, and it’s flowing right now—right now. And my dear friend, I believe in Jesus Christ for personal reasons. I believe because I believe.

## **Conclusion**

And I know because I know that there is in my heart and in my life a dear person whose name is Jesus. To whom shall we go? There is none other, but Jesus.

# Overcoming

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: December 31, 1989**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 5:1–6**

*“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.”*

1 JOHN 5:1

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God's Word now and open, if you will to 1 John chapter 5. Now that's not the Gospel of John, but the epistles of John, back toward the book of the Revelation. You can find it very easily. Just go to the Revelation and turn left and you'll come to it. 1 John chapter 5, and we're going to read together the first 6 verses.

I'm speaking today on the subject, overcoming. The sermon title has just one word in it, overcoming. Helping you to be an overcomer today, tomorrow, this coming year, this decade, and the rest of your life until Jesus comes. The Bible says that, *“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God”* (1 John 5:1). Are you born of God? Have you been saved? Does God's Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you're a child of God?

The Bible goes on to say in 1 John 5 verse 1: *“and every one that loveth him that begat.”* That is, who is the great begatter? That's God himself. Every one that loveth God loveth him also that is begotten of Him. That is if you love the Father then you are

going to love the children of the Father. By this we know that we love the children of the Father. 1 John 5 verses 2–3: *“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God.”*

Now, a lot of people say what does it mean to love God? Well he says in 1 John 5 verses 3–6: *“...this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he that came by water and blood, 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.”*

Are you an overcomer? I mean honestly, are you an overcomer? Or, are you just simply trying to hold on 'til Jesus gets here? Are you like that lady who said, “I can overcome anything but temptation?” Now, there are a lot of folks like that. I mean, they talk a lot about being overcomers, but they are not overcomers, they are overcome. They sing “Victory in Jesus,” but they are victors. They are victims and they do not live a life of continuous, perpetual victory and overcoming.

Now my dear friend, an overcoming Christian is not a super Christian. He is a normal Christian. The Christian who is not overcoming is a sub-normal Christian. It is God's plan. It is God's blueprint for you—day by day, this day, and the rest of your life—that become an overcomer. And, when we meet one another around here in the church and we walk up and I say, “Bob, how are you doing?” He ought to say, “I'm overcoming.” “Margaret, how are you doing?” “I'm overcoming. I am living a life of victory, a life of overcoming.”

Now, let me talk to you about three very simple facts. And yet, these simple facts have tremendous importance for us if we're going to live in the future. And, I can assure you that I am speaking to me as I speak to you. As we face a new year and a new decade, there are three things I would lay on your heart.

## **I. You Will Encounter Powerful Opposition**

Number one, you will encounter powerful opposition. You will face, you will encounter powerful opposition. Look in verse 4. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world—underscore that phrase—*the world*, because that is your opposition. You have an enemy out there and that enemy is called *the world*. Now, God wants you to have opposition. God has engineered your life that you would have opposition. God could kill the devil and eradicate the world's system if He wanted to, but He doesn't. Because dear friend, if you don't have any opposition, you'll never know any victory.

Many of us are getting set to watch some football tomorrow, and you know those teams will be out there, those great big 250 and 260 pound men will be butting heads,

and trying to move that bag of zipped up air up and down that pasture. And, you know it's really all ridiculous but I enjoy it. I have to confess that. But, you know, why do those teams go out there when the other team is there? Why don't they go out about 2 A.M. in the morning when no other team is out there and call a play. They could run a touchdown on every play. You say, "Sure they could. But what fun is that?" And, you're quite right. I mean there can't be any victory unless there is opposition. You couldn't sing "Victory in Jesus" with a smile on your face if there was nothing to have victory over. God allows you to have opposition that you might know victory. But, you will have opposition. And, this opposition is not some football game, it is grim, and it is sinister.

Now, the Bible speaks, in verse 4, of the world. What do we mean by the world? Well, certainly we don't mean the planet earth. That's not your opposition. When the Bible says, "the world" it's not talking about terra firma, it's not talking about the rocks and the trees, the birds, the bees and the hills, the rivers, and all of that. No, no, no that's the world of nature and God made that world. And Jesus said, "*Consider the lilies how they grow*" (Luke 12:27). Jesus is grateful for the world of nature and so am I. It is God's handiwork.

Well, what is the world then? You say, "It must be the people of the world." Oh no, the people of the world are not your enemy. "*We wrestle not against flesh and blood*" the Bible says (Ephesians 6:12). God so loved the people of the world that He gave His only begotten Son for them. And, what God loves, we are to love.

What is this world that we are not to love? What is this world that we are to overcome? It is a system. It is Satan's system. The word that is translated *world* here is the word *cosmos*, and it means *an order*, or *a system*. It is Satan's system.

You see, when a woman puts cosmetics on her face do you know what she is doing? She is putting her face in order. You see? Anything that is cosmopolitan means it runs in an orderly way. So, the Bible says that there is an order that we must overcome. There is a system that we must overcome. It is Satan's system.

Just go on here in 1 John chapter 5, just fast forward on to verse 19: "*And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*" Do you see that? The whole system lieth in wickedness. And, the idea of lieth in wickedness has the idea of being in the bosom of Satan. Satan just has a system and it's just lying right in his bosom. Satan has this world and he is rocking this world in his arms. It is Satan's system. Now we don't have to guess what the world is because the Bible tells us very clearly what the world is.

Go back to 1 John chapter 2 and look with me in verse 16. Look at it. "*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*" Now, that tells us dear friend about what the world's system is. This is what we mean and this is what you are going to have to overcome.

First of all, the lust of the flesh. And, I'm telling you, more and more and more, you are going to have to say, "Dear God give me power to overcome the lust of the flesh." The other night I was sitting, watching television, just going through the channels, and I looked at something and I said, "Dear God what on earth is that? How did that get in on public television?" The devil said, "Why don't you watch that?" The Lord said, "You have no business watching that." Do you ever face anything like that? Don't look so holy.

#### **A. Passions**

Now dear friend, that's what we call the lust of the flesh. That deals with our passions. Now I'm not just talking about erotic passions. It's anything that tells you to pamper the flesh so that you will do something contrary to the will of God. That is what we call the lust of the flesh. And so, that deals with passions. And, then look if you will, here. And, all that is of the world, the lust of the flesh and then the lust of the eyes.

#### **B. Possessions**

Now what does he mean with the lust of the eyes. Well, that deals with possessions, not passions, but possessions. You know the eyes just simply see things and they want those things. Your eyes have an appetite. Have you ever heard the expressions, "feast your eyes on that?" Just as your flesh has an appetite, your eyes have an appetite. And, many of us have a desire to acquire and to have things. You see, the lust of the flesh deals with doing, but the lust of the eyes deals with having. Now, let's go on and look at what he says, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and then he says, the pride of life, the pride of life.

#### **C. Positions**

First of all, passions, secondly possessions, and thirdly positions. That's the pride of life. To be something, to be somebody. Now there's nothing wrong with holy ambition, but he's talking here about unholy ambition. To try to be first, to put yourself ahead. To somehow be the biggest, the greatest, the smartest, the grandest, or whatever it is. This is what motivates so many people. Drive the car that'll make your neighbors envious.

Madison Avenue knows how to work all three of these. These things are not new. They're just as old as they can be. When the devil saw Eve in the Garden of Eden he said, "Eat that fruit." What was that? The lust of the flesh. And, then he said that the tree was beautiful. What was that? The lust of the eyes. Desire to make one wise, what was that? The pride of life. You see, that's not new. That's as old as the Garden of Eden. When the Lord Jesus Christ was here on earth, how did the devil tempt the Lord Jesus? He said, "Turn these stones into bread." What is that? The lust of the flesh.

Then he said to the Lord Jesus, "I'll give you all the kingdoms of the world if you'll fall down and worship me." What is that? The lust of the eyes. You can have all of this.

And then he said, "Cast yourself down from the temple." What's that? The pride of

life. That is, you just come floating into the temple court and everybody will say, “Isn’t he wonderful. Look what He did as He just floated down on angels wings.”

I am telling you, my dear friend, that today you’re going to face and I’m going to face these three temptations. They deal in the area of passions. They deal in the area of possessions. They deal in the area of pride. Passions, that’s doing. Possessions, that’s having. Pride that’s being. Doing, having, and being.

The devil knows how to get us. You see, but my dear friend, all of these are substitutes for what God wants us to have, because dear, we are suppose to do something, but what are we to do? Do the will of God. We are supposed to have something, but what? Have what He wants us to have. We are to be something, but to be what He wants us to be. And, if the devil can’t get you any other way, dear friend, he’ll just simply get you to do a good thing the wrong way.

Now, you’re going to be pressured. There’s going to be unbelievable pressure this world’s system. Now, let me tell you about the world. We have been saved out of this world, but we are in the world. We are sent back to the world to witness to the world and that’s the only business we have in the world. We are not to conform to the world. We are not to condemn the world. We are not to compromise with the world, but we are to confront the world, and we are to overcome the world with the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, there you’re going to meet tremendous opposition. And, don’t get the idea that because you’re saved, you’re not going to have any opposition. As a matter of fact, that’s really when you’re opposition begins. I’ve said it before. If you’ve never met the devil it’s because you and the devil have been going in the same direction. You turn around, you start to live for God, and you’re going to have a collision with a system that I call Satan’s system and that the Bible calls the world.

## **II. You Must Exercise Personal Obedience**

All right, so number one, listen. This coming year and indeed this afternoon, you’re going to encounter powerful opposition. Number two, you must exercise personal obedience. Powerful opposition, personal obedience.

Now, let me tell you what overcoming is. It is obeying. That’s all it is. Just obeying God. You want to be an overcomer? What is the formula for overcoming? Just obey God. Just that simple. Begin to read again in 1 John chapter 5 and look with me about verse 2. By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep His Commandments. What is keeping His Commandments? Well, that’s just obedience. For this is the love of God that we keep His Commandments. And, his Commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. now do you see, where he equates keeping the Commandments of God with overcoming the world. Do you see that? They’re almost synonymous. You keep the Commandments of God, you



overcome the world.

Now, he gives us three reasons for commandment keeping. Why should you keep God's commandments?

#### **A. For the Love of God**

First of all, he says if you love God you're going to keep His Commandments. By this we know—verse two—that we love the children of God when we love God and keep His Commandments. Verse three says, for this is the love of God that we keep His Commandments.

I don't want anybody in this auditorium today to say that you love God if you're not keeping His Commandments. You're a liar. For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments. Jesus said in John chapter 14 verse 15: *"If ye love me, keep my commandments."* Jesus said in John 14 verse 23: *"If a man love me, he will keep my words."* So, the reason number one—if you're going to be a Commandment keeper—is that you love God. I mean, Love loves to please the one it loves. Don't tell me you love God, don't sing, "Oh how I love Jesus," if you don't keep His Word. You're just a liar. You're just playing games. Huh, huh.

#### **B. For the Love of Others**

All right now, let me give you the second reason. Not only love for God but love for others. Look if you will in verse 2, by this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His Commandments. You see, listen. If you love me then you're going to obey God. The best thing a dad can do for his children is to obey God. The best thing a husband can do for his wife is to obey God. The best thing a Christian can do for the Church is to obey God. Because you see, when you disobey God it hurts me. When I disobey God it hurts you. The only problems we have in this world today are people who disobey God. Any time you get hurt by another person, somehow that person is disobeying God.

When I get on an airplane, I want that pilot to be an obedient pilot because if he disobeys the laws of aerodynamics, the laws of the federal administration, aviation administration, or whatever, I can get hurt. And, dear friend, if we love others we ought to obey God. But, let me give you a very powerful reason.

Look in verse 3 that says, for this is the love of God that we keep his commandments. Now, watch this, and His Commandments are not grievous. do you see that? Do you see that? His Commandments are not grievous. Do you know what that means? His Commandments are not burdensome. His Commandments are not irksome. Have you ever gotten that idea? Has the devil ever told you, "Oh, oh it's so hard to keep the Commandments of God?" Have you ever believed that lie?

The apostle John says that His Commandments are not grievous. It's not hard to

keep His Commandments. Don't get the idea that God is some sort of vengeful deity up there, sitting up there on the throne saying, "Now let's see, what can I do that'll make life hard for him? Oh boy, here's a hard commandment, let's see if he can keep this one. Boy that'll make him squirm like a worm in hot ashes." Oh, no, no, no, listen, all of God's Commandments are for your welfare. Every time God says, "Thou shalt not." He's saying, "Don't hurt yourself." Every time God says, "Thou shalt," he's saying, "Help yourself to happiness."

God's will is not for God's sake, but it is for your sake. God doesn't need anything because he's God. What God is trying to do is to help you to live a happy, overcoming, victorious life. And therefore, the will of God is not something that we have to do, but it is something that we get to do. It is a pleasure to do God's will. And, so His Commandments are not grievous. So why keep the Commandments of God? Well, keeping the Commandments of God is just simply overcoming. And, why do you do it? Well, if you love God you'll keep His Commandments. If you love others you'll keep His Commandments. Be good to yourself, and keep His Commandments.

Well you say, "All right, Adrian that sounds well and good." You said, "You're going to tell me how to be an overcomer and then you tell me to keep God's Commandments. But, that's the one thing I can't do. That's like, you're going to tell me, Adrian, or I'm going to tell you how to be rich. And, the answer is have a lot of money. I mean, show me, how can I keep God's commandments? Yes, I will agree, I will agree, if I kept God's commandments, I would be an overcomer. But, the problem is, I don't have what it takes to keep God's Commandments."

### **III. You Can Practice Perpetual Overcoming**

And, I'm going to show you that you do, because this same Scripture that I read to you says number one, we can expect powerful opposition, number two, we must exercise personal obedience, but number three, my dear friend, listen to me, we can expect perpetual overcoming.

Now, begin to read in 1 John 5 verse 4. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God. This is he that came by water and by blood. And, in those scriptures, I gave you the three great ingredients that God has put into your life.

There are three great resources that God has given you so that you can obey and so that you can be an overcomer. And, here they are: number one birth. Number two, belief. Number three, blood. Okay? Birth, belief, and blood.

#### **A. By Birth**

Now, let me show you what I mean by that. That's what John is being theological about

here, but he's not being theological just simply to help you to be a better theologian. He's trying to help you to live a victorious life so that you might obey and overcome. So, let's see what he's talking about. First of all, look what he look at what he says, For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world. Now you see, when you're born of God then you become a partaker of the divine nature. Now, the Bible calls that regeneration. And, what does he mean by generation? Well, you are re-gened. Re-gene-erated. You see, I have in me right now some genes and chromosomes. I got those by my natural birth and I have natural proclivities that came by my natural birth. But, when I received Jesus Christ, I got re-gened. I am re-gene-erated. I have some new genes, some spiritual chromosomes in me, and I have the nature of God. I have become a partaker of the divine nature. And, God has given me inside and supernatural power. Now, you need to understand that if you're saved then you have supernatural power. Don't ever say, "I can't overcome." Because that's not humility, but it is blasphemy and unbelief. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I want to give you a statement and I want you to listen to it. All that the Father was to His Son Jesus Christ, His son, Jesus Christ, wants to be to us. May I say that again? All Father was to His Son Jesus Christ, His Son Jesus Christ, wants to be to us. But, all that Jesus Christ was to His Father, we are to be like Jesus Christ. Now, have you got that? All that the Father was to His Son Jesus Christ, His Son Jesus Christ, wants to be to us. But, all that Jesus Christ was to His Father, we are to be to Jesus Christ. And, when we are to Christ what Christ was to the father then, my dear friend, the power that the Father put into His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the same supernatural power that will be flowing through us.

I have been born again. Now, if you haven't been born again, you're not going to overcome the world. The devil's going to say, "Jump." And, you're going to say, "How high?" "Oh," you say, "I'm free to do what I want." Yeah, but you're not free to do as you ought until you receive the Lord Jesus Christ. No body, no body, no body, can be an overcomer without the new birth.

All right, first of all, birth. But now, a lot of people are born again, who don't overcome because dear friend, they don't take what they receive by birth and put it into practice.

## **B. By Belief**

And so that brings us to the next thing. Not only by reason of birth, but also by reason of belief. Now look at verse 4. For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Now, once you have been born of God and once you have received this nature, then how do you put it into practice? By your faith. By believing, you see, faith is the lifestyle of an overcomer. You do not overcome the world by trying, but you overcome the world by trusting. Now

friend, that's more than just a turn of phrase. If you don't understand that you will never have victory in the 1990s or any other time. First of all, there's the birth that gives you the inherent possibility because you've received the nature of God. But, it is faith now that begins to put that into practice. Now, listen to me. Faith is not simply believing that what God says is true. Faith is acting upon it because it is true. May I say that again? Faith is not simply believing that what God says is true, faith is acting upon it because it is true. Faith is not blindly believing in spite of evidence. Faith is something else. It is acting and it is obeying in spite of consequences. Let me say it again. It is not blindly believing in spite of evidence, it is boldly obeying in spite of consequences. Regardless of the consequences, regardless of whether it seems right or wrong to you in the flesh, you say, "If God said it I'll do it."

Now, when you begin to have enough faith to say, "I'm going to obey God simply by faith." You know the reason that many of us don't obey God? We really just don't believe God. We really don't believe God.

Before this service, somebody came up to me and they said this. They said, "Pastor, we've been growing in the Lord and God's been speaking to us. And, we haven't been tithing. But, by God's grace, this coming year we're going to be tithers." Now, I want to ask you a question, was that a step? What kind of a step was that? Well, it was a step of obedience. But, why were they obeying? I don't think it was because they felt guilty about tithing. I believe it was because they began to believe God's Word more and more. You see, God's Word says *"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it"* (Malachi 3:10). Now listen. Anybody who would believe that would tithe. I mean, listen. Anybody who would believe, "You know if I tithe, God will just open the windows of Heaven and pour me out a blessing." He's tithe. The only reason people don't tithe is they don't believe it. They don't believe it. You see, dear friend, it is faith that causes us to believe the Word of God. If you are not obeying it is because you are not believing. You say, "I know that's what God says, but if I were to do that something might happen to me. If I were to do that, things might go wrong." So, you think you're smarter than God.

Now, my friend, I want to tell you here that there is opposition. There must be obedience, and in order for you to have obedience, dear friend, God has given you three great resources. Number one, your birth, number two, your belief.

Why does, how does belief help you to overcome. Well you see, what belief does is it makes Jesus Christ real to you, real to you. You see, look in verse 5. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God. I'm not talking about believing that abstractly, but when you believe that the Son of God is in you. And,

what is Jesus? Prophet, priest and king. As prophet, He will enlighten you. As priest, He will intercede for you. As king, He will clear the way for you and supply every need that you have. Jesus Christ becomes a bright living reality to you. And, if Jesus Christ is not a bright living reality to you, you'll never really overcome.

Do you know why people love the world? This same book of 1 John says this, if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. "Well," you say, "The reason I don't love the Father is because I love the world." Oh no, the reason you love the world is 'cause you don't love the Father. If any man loves the world then the love of the Father is not in him. Who is the love of the Father? The Lord Jesus. "This is My beloved Son." You see, everybody wants to be satisfied. I do and you do. We all want to be satisfied. I mean I want to have my needs met. Now, if Jesus Christ is not meeting my needs, where am I going to go to have my needs met? To the world. If Jesus Christ is meeting my needs then I don't have to go world to have my needs met. I don't have to go to the world with its prince, the world with its power, and the world with its pressure. I can come to Jesus Christ. You see, if any man loves the world then the love of the Father is not in him. It is not that he loves. He doesn't love the world because he loves the Father and the Father has satisfied. You see, turn your eyes upon Jesus.

Look full into His wonderful face and the things of earth will go strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. If I had just set down to a wonderful meal. I mean a big, thick steak and some of those peas—I don't mean those big ones—I mean the little ones. I don't like those big ones. And, a nice baked potato. And, a tall glass of ice tea and all of that, and everything is just right. And, then after I finish, you come up to me with a plate of stale crumbs and you say, "Adrian here help yourself." I'll say, "No thank you. I'm already satisfied."

Now, what I'm trying to say dear friend is that if you load up on the Lord Jesus Christ, and if Jesus Christ is real to you then you're not going to be in the back alley eating tin cans with the devil's billy goats. The only reason that the people go for the things of this world is that they have an unsatisfied desire that they think that the world can satisfy. I mean, a person who's already satisfied in Jesus doesn't have an itch the devil can scratch. You need to load up on the Lord Jesus Christ and if any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Now what does faith do? Faith makes Jesus Christ a bright living reality to you. Who is the one that overcomes? The one that believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. All right, now listen. Here's the third thing that God has given you. And oh this thrills me.

### **C. By Blood**

I said, first of all your birth. I said, secondly your belief. And, thirdly blood. Notice if you will in 1 John 5 verse 6. And this is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ

not by water all only but also by blood. Not by water only but by water and blood. Now, what on earth does that mean? Well, He came by water. That's the natural birth. That speaks of His natural birth. Some think it speaks of the water that came out of his side when he was crucified. But, that's not the point I'm making now, so I'm going to leave that lying right there. But, let's just concentrate on the blood, on the blood.

You see, this is what God has given, that you might overcome. God has given you the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, you read over there in the book of Revelation chapter 23 verse 11: *"And they overcame him"*—Satan the prince of this world—*"by the blood of the Lamb."*

I read a very interesting book on hematology. And, I could hardly lay it down. And, this book on blood talked about all of the processes of life that go on in the blood stream. And, how God has given to you in your blood certain propriety, proprieties, or propensities that war against disease. They are called antibodies. And, whenever an invader gets into your body—a microbe gets into your body that would destroy your body—These antibodies, in your blood, war against that and you get well.

But, you know sometimes an invader will come into your body, a disease that you don't have the name, rank, and serial number for inside your body. And, by the time your body mobilized some antibodies to fight that disease, you're dead. And, that's the reason so many people died of small pox because we didn't know how to immunize against small pox. People would get small pox and they would just die.

Up in Missouri, a tribe of thirty-thousand Indians and were reduced to thirty Indians by small pox. The settlers went in there and they found the Indians just lying in the tent, stacked up dead. But, you know how Pasteur and others learned that we could immunize.

Now, how do you immunize? What you do is find a person who's had a disease and who's overcome that disease and the person who has overcome that disease has what they call wise blood. That is, he already has the name, rank, and serial number of that invader on the inside of his body. He has these antibodies on the inside of his body that can fight that. So, what they do is get the blood of somebody who has already overcome that disease. They make a serum out of it and inject that into somebody else and immunize that person and now he gets the code. He gets the name, rank, and serial number into his own blood and now he can overcome what that person overcame because now he has gotten wise blood into him. And so, that blood knows the name, rank, and serial number of that invader and when that invader comes in, he can overcome.

Now, let me give you something folks, which is just going to bless your socks off this morning. In John chapter 16 and verse 33 Jesus said, *"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of*

*good cheer; I have overcome the world.*” Now, how did Jesus Christ overcome the world? Jesus Christ took the disease of sin into His own body willingly. He was not a sinner, but He took sin into His own body. And, He went to the cross and on the cross He paid the sin debt and He overcame sin.

Now, my dear friend, listen. Jesus said, “Whatever I have overcome, you can overcome.” The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, now flows through his body, the Church. Are you listening to me? The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, now flows through His body, the Church. Many of us think about the shed blood, but my dear friend, the shed blood dealt with the penalty of sin. The shed blood deals with the power of sin. Are you listening? The shed blood dealt with the penalty of sin. The shed blood deals with the power of sin. Jesus has a body and in that body is His blood. You are the body of Christ. And, the rich, red, and royal blood of the Lord Jesus Christ cleanses us. Not cleansed, but cleanses us from all sin. You have everything that is necessary for you to live a victorious life. You have the birth, the belief, and the blood. It’s all yours. And, that’s the way that you are going to overcome. That’s the way, dear friend, when you first of all make absolutely certain that you have been born again. Secondly, have faith in God that makes Jesus Christ real to you. Have your satisfaction in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let Jesus be your all in all by faith. And, then dear friend, on the authority of the blood of Jesus Christ, they overcame him, Revelation 12 verse 11, by the blood of the lamb.

## **Conclusion**

Let me sum it up. This year, you can expect powerful opposition, the world. This year, you must express personal obedience, but you can dear friend, practice perpetual overcoming. The word *overcometh*, is a Greek form that means *perpetual overcoming*. Not that you overcome some day, but tomorrow, and the next day, and the next day, and the next day ’til Jesus comes you’ll be an overcomer.

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, eyes are closed. Father God, I pray now, that many in this building today will say, yes to Christ, and become overcomers. In His wonderful name, amen. No one.



# Dealing with Doubt

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 29, 1985

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 John 5:1, 10–13

*“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”*

1 JOHN 5:13

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Commandment Test

II. The Companion Test

III. The Commitment Test

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take your Bibles please and turn to 1 John chapter 5. We're going to be talking in just a few moments on this subject, dealing with doubt. I was in the hospital visiting awhile back. There was a lady very near to death. Her loved ones had come in and they were standing around her bedside and I began to talk to this lady and witness to her. I found out that she wasn't a Christian. She did not have the assurance of sin forgiven and Christ in her heart. So I asked her if I might have the permission to share with her how she could know Christ and know the fullness of Him and his joy and His forgiveness in her heart. And, she said, "Yes I'd like that very much." And, so I opened The Word of God and I shared with her the way and the plan of salvation. And, then I prayed with her and lead her in a prayer. She prayed and asked Christ to come into her heart. And, then after I lead her in this prayer I said, "If you meant that with all of your heart, would you give me your hand and she did." Then I just praised God in my own heart and I turned to her son-in-law who was there and I said, "Isn't it wonderful that your mother-in-law has been saved!" "Oh," he said, "no one can know that they are saved." But, I said, "She just prayed and asked God to come into her heart. And, the Bible says, *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Romans 10:13). But, he said, "No, no one can know." You have to wait until you die and stand before a God at judgment before you can ever really know that you are saved." I said, "Sir, there's a verse of scripture that I want you to see." And, it's the

same verse I want to share with you this morning, my dear friend.

1 John chapter 5 and verse 13 where the apostle Paul John says, *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may”—* what’s that next word?—*“know”*—no ifs, ands, buts, and maybes about it—*“that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God”* (1 John 5:13). Now, John wrote the book of John and he said he wrote the book of John—that is the Gospel of John—*“...that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name”* (John 20:31). That is he wrote the Gospel of John to evangelize the sinner. But, he wrote this little epistle of John, it’s almost at postscript, a P.S. to edify the saints. And, one of the things he wants you to do is to have the assurance of your salvation. He said, “I wrote a book of the Bible, this is what I wrote, ‘...that ye may know that ye have eternal life...’” (1 John 5:13). And, right away that tells me two things. That tells me dear friend you can be saved and know it. Amen? You can be saved and know it. John said that, “I wrote that you might know.” But, it also tells me that you can be saved and doubt it.

Now, why does it tell me that you can be saved and doubt it? Because if you couldn’t doubt it, why would John write, that we might know? You understand what I’m saying? He’s writing to talk to Christians who have doubts that they might get rid of those doubts. It is possible to be saved and to have doubts. Now, doubts are not good, but there’s even a bright side to doubt.

You see, doubt is to your spirit what pain is to your body. If you’re feeling a pain right now, does that mean you are dead? No, it means you are alive. You see, you couldn’t feel pain unless you have life. Now, pain is a signal that something is wrong in your body. Doubt is as signal that there is something wrong in your spirit. Doubt is to the spirit what pain is to the body.

Now, I’m not trying to say that doubt is good any more than I am trying to say that pain is good. But, pain is good when it becomes a warning signal and doubt is good when it becomes a warning signal. You see to tell us that we need to deal with that doubt. And, so I want to show you how to deal with doubt today. Now, it is possible to be saved and to doubt. As a matter of fact, how many of you after you were saved ever at least at one time had a doubt about your salvation; let me see your hand? Almost all of us, right? O.K. So we have doubted our salvation.

A woman told the great evangelist Dwight L. Moody, she said, “I’ve been saved twenty-five years and I’ve never had one single doubt.” He said, “Madame, I doubt you’ve been saved.” That would be like someone saying, “We’ve been married fifty years and never had an argument.” I’d say, “I doubt you’ve been married.”

Now, folks I’m not trying to say that arguments are good. I’m not trying to say that pain is good. I’m not trying to say that doubts are good, but I’m saying that they are

facts of life. And, when John said, “I have written a book that you might know that you are saved.” That is it is possible to be saved and have doubts about it. What John was trying to do was to clear up those doubts because he was writing to Christians. O.K.? And, so what John is giving to us here is a way that we can say, “Praise God, I know that I know that I know that my sins are forgiven. Christ is in my heart and Heaven in my home. Heaven is my home.” Because that is very important, it is important in service. It is important in soul winning. That’s so important in service.

There are some people who say, “Oh, you ought not to give people the assurance of their salvation. If you give them the assurance of their salvation then they will get real lax.” No! Folks, that’s crazy. The assurance of your salvation is the base that you work from. You see, when I know that my future is secure then I can concentrate on the present, see? And, it’s so important to soul winning. What kind of a soul winner would a person be who did not have the assurance of his own salvation? A person who says, “You come follow me. I don’t know where I’m going.” No, listen, we want to follow people who would say with the apostle Paul, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I’ve committed to Him against that day.” John says, “I wrote this book that you might have assurance that you might know—not hope, think, wish, or surmise—but that you might know that you have eternal life.”

And, then John gives us three tests and I want to show you those tests. Now, what I’ve done is tried to take the book and almost condense the book of 1 John and to extract out of it the three major tests that John gives that we might know that we have eternal life. And, he tells us before each of these tests that this is a test that is a benchmark or a birthmark as it were of salvation. So I want us to look at these tests.

## **I. The Commandment Test**

The first test, I’m going to call the commandment test. Look with me in 1 John chapter 2 and we begin in verse 3, all right? 1 John chapter 2 and verse three says, “*And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments*” (1 John 2:3). Now, just underscore that and put a mark by it somewhere if you are one who likes to mark your Bible and don’t be afraid to wear out a Bible. If you wear out a Bible say, “Praise God” and get you another one, amen? Somebody said, “If you have a Bible that’s falling apart you probably have a life that’s not.” Alright, now look. “*And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar*”—I wonder why John doesn’t just say what he thinks, huh. Why does he beat around the bush like that?—“*He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him*” (1 John 2:3–4). Do you have the idea that John had been in some kind of a Baptist testimonial meeting where a man stood up and talked about his salvation—how glad he was to be saved—and ol’

John wants to say, “Liar. I know the way you live. You say that you know Him, but you don’t keep His commandments. You’re lying. You’re lying.” Listen, he goes on in verse 5, *“But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked”* (1 John 2:5–6). That is his John’s logic here is impeccable. If I am in Christ and Christ is in me, then I’m going to be walking like Jesus walks. And, Jesus of course keeps the command of God. And, so a person who says that he is saved who doesn’t keep the commandments of God is lying. That’s what John says, “I don’t care whose church he is a member of. I don’t care how much theology he has in his head. I don’t care what kind of experience he had at an altar.” John says, “If you’re not keeping the commandments of God, and you say that you know Him, you’re lying” (1 John 2:4).

Let me ask a question now, how many in this building—ever since you’ve been saved—kept every command of God? Never broken one? None of us. Well, now wait a minute. Does that mean that none of us are saved? Well, John says, “that if we know Him, we’re going to keep his commandments” (1 John 2:3). The key is in this word “keep.”

This word “keep” is a mariner’s word. And, back in this day when a man would be out on the high seas he would steer by the stars. He would keep his eye, fix his focus, on the stars and he would steer by the stars. And, that “keeping” is the same word as he “kept” his eye upon the stars. It is the same word that John borrows here to use to tell us about keeping the commandments of God. That is the commandments of God are going to be the standard by which I chart my course. I order my life by the commandments of God. This does not mean, of course, that a man on the high seas would not be blown off course. It doesn’t mean that he might not over steer. It doesn’t mean that he might not nod at the wheel and somehow be distracted or somehow fail to keep a perfect chart. But, the goal, the aim, the desire, and the controlling factor in his life are those stars, as he keeps his eye on the stars. It is the same way with the commands of God.

You see, John is not talking about sinless perfection here. The Bible does not teach sinless perfection. But, the Bible does teach that we have no right to call ourselves children of God if we do not care for God’s commandments, if we do not order our lives by God’s commandments.

I tell you folks, there are people who walk down the aisle of churches and shake hands with preachers and join churches like they’re joining a country club. There’s no change of heart and there’s no change of life. They don’t change their lifestyle. They live the same ungodly lives. Those people have no reason whatsoever to think that they are going to Heaven. I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again, “If your religion hasn’t changed your life, you better change your religion.” *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a*

*new creature...*” (2 Corinthians 5:17). We are not talking about sinless perfection. But, I am trying to tell you my dear friend that the goal—the aim—of your life will be to live according to The Word of God and the commandments of this book. *“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments”* (1 John 2:3). If we chart our course by The Word of God.

Now, that’s the way he says it positively. Let me tell you how he says it negatively. It’s almost the same thing. Let’s look if you will here in 1 John chapter 3 and verse 6, *“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him”* (1 John 3:6). Oh John, he doesn’t mince words does he? Look in verse 8, *“He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil”*—and if you think that’s tough, look in verse 9—*“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin”*—now watch it—*“for his seed remaineth in him”*—That is, the nature of God remains in Him—*“and he cannot sin, because he is born of God”* (1 John 3:8–9). He can’t sin. Well, you say, “Wait a minute pastor. If you’re trying to give assurance, you’re not helping me very much.”

Well, is John contradicting himself? Look over in 1 John here for a moment and look in verse 8, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). And, notice that John included himself in that. He said, “we” not “you,” but “we.” John was talking about himself. And, he said, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). Look in verse 10, “If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:10). Look in chapter 2 verse 1, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). “...and if any man sin.” And, yet then he says over here, in 1 John 3 verse 9, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9).

Now, folks on the surface, that’s a contradiction. On the one place he says, “It’s impossible for a Christian to sin” (1 John 3:9). In the other place he says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves” (1 John 1:8). We almost feel like saying, “John, make up your mind.” But, what John is using here in the Greek language is a verb form. What simply is saying in the present tense is, in John chapter three—1 John chapter three—when a man is born of God he does not habitually practice sin. And, you read that in an amplified translation if you have an amplified translation. That’s exactly what John is saying. A person that is born of God cannot habitually practice sin. He cannot make sin his lifestyle. It does not, he—John—is not talking about sinless perfection. The first chapter makes that very clear. *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”* (1 John 1:8). But, on the other hand he is not

talking about the life of a libertine, a person who is a church member who has had no change of lifestyle.

John is saying, “If you know the Lord Jesus Christ, if you have been born of God, you cannot habitually practice sin.” Why? Because your seed remains in you. What is he talking about “the seed that remains in you” (1 John 3:9). He’s talking about that germ of life that is come from God above. You are born of God. You have been made a partaker of the divine nature and that divine nature is what? Holiness, God is holy. Now, if you can sin willfully, knowingly, deliberately, habitually and you feel no conviction, no compunction, no sorrow, no grief, and no remorse, my dear friend, you have no reason to believe you are saved, none whatsoever! You need to get saved. There are people who are living a lifestyle of sin who somehow hope that they are going to get into Heaven. Friend, don’t be so foolish.

*“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments”* (1 John 2:3). Now, we’re not saved because we keep His commandments. We keep His commandments because we are saved. Salvation is by grace, not by commandment keeping. We’re talking about knowing that we’ve been saved because we keep His commandments.

## **II. The Companion Test**

There is the commandment test. That’s the first one. Now, I want to give you another test. Not only the commandment test, but the companion test. I want you to look here now in 1 John chapter 3 and verse 14, *“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren...”* (1 John 3:14). Again, he’s telling us how to know it, isn’t he? *“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him”* (1 John 3:14–15). Turn over to chapter 4 and look in verse 20 now. *“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also”* (1 John 4:20–21). And, then look in chapter 5 verse 1. *“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him”* (1 John 5:1). It is very clear that another birthmark of the believer is love for the brethren. We know that we love; we know that we’re of Him because we love the brethren.

You see when I am saved, I want to be right with my brothers and I want to be with my brothers. Have you ever heard anybody say, “Hey, you don’t have to go to church to worship God?” That’s true. But, have you ever heard anybody say, “You can worship God just as well without going to church.” That’s false. The Bible says, *“Not forsaking*

*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). We ought to pray for these who are sick and shut in and who cannot be here. Even watching by television, listening by radio or tape is no substitute for being with the saints. For you see, listen, Jesus said, *"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"* (Matthew 18:20). There's a very special way in which our Lord is present when the saints join together to worship the Lord. As a matter of fact, did you know I found out recently something very interesting? The word "saint" is never used in the singular in the New Testament. It's always the "saints." You see, God blesses the saints. Even Jesus when he taught us to pray taught us to pray, *"...Our Father..."* (Matthew 6:9). Not "My father," but *"...Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be they name..."* (Matthew 6:9).

Dear friend, there is the companion test. If you love Jesus, you're going to love the church. And, I'll tell you why. It is because of the nature of the Christian and the nature of the church. What is the nature of the Christian? Well, the nature of the Christian is the nature of God. Let me show you here in how John points it out. Would you look with me for an example in 1 John chapter 4 and verse 7 and look at this verse here. 1 John chapter 4 verse 7, *"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love"* (1 John 4:7–8). Now, if you wanted to tell someone what God is like, you'd have to say, "God is love" (1 John 4:8) right? God is love. Now, notice John's logic. God is love. All right, we are born of God. That is we have the nature of God.

Now, if God is love and I have the nature of God, then I am going to have love in me. If I don't have love in me, I don't have the nature of God. If I don't have the nature of God, I haven't been born of God. That's what John is saying. You see, one reason that you love the brethren is because of what you are as a Christian. Another reason you love the brethren is because of what they are. Let me tell you what the church is. The Bible describes the church two ways, more than two ways but these two ways I'm talking about right now.

The church, number one is called the body of Christ. Number two the church is called the bride of Christ. Now, the church is the body of Christ. He's the head and we're the members of that mystical body. Now, folks pay attention now, the church and Jesus Christ are not identical, but they are inseparable. If you take the head from the body, what do you have? Death. Don't be so silly as to say, "I love Jesus, but I don't love the church." That would be like saying, "I love Adrian Rogers, I just don't love his body—only his head." See, that's ridiculous or you say, "I don't love my body, I just love my head." The Bible says, "No man ever yet hated his own body."

Now, listen Jesus loves His body which is the church. We are the body of Christ.



Now, it would be ridiculous—absolutely unmitigated foolishness—for you to say, “I love Jesus Christ but I do not love His body, the church.” If you love Christ, you’re going to love what Christ loves and Christ loves His church, the body of Christ.

But, not only is the church His body, the church is also His bride. Now, dear friend, what man doesn’t love his bride? And, the church is the bride of Christ.

Now, listen if you really wanted to get my attention there are several ways you could do it. One way you could start harming my body. My finger would be out there on a table somewhere on a platform and you could walk over and stand on my finger. Well, you would get my attention. I would say, “Pardon me.” But, Get off. You’re standing on me.” You’d say, “Oh no, I’m not standing on you, I’m standing on your finger.” I’d say, “Well, call it what you will but move it because what affects my finger affects me.”

Now, now you see, listen, we are members of the body of Christ. Do you remember when Saul was on the road to Damascus to persecute the church? Jesus met him and Jesus said to him, “...*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*...” (Acts 26:14). Now, Saul may have said, “Hey, I’m not persecuting you, I’m persecuting the church.” But, do you understand what I’m saying? When you persecute the church you persecute Jesus because we’re members of his body. When you love the church, you love Jesus. When you honor the church, you honor Jesus. When you neglect the church, you neglect Jesus. We are members of his body. He is the head and we are members, so one way that you could get my attention would be to abuse my body.

I tell you another way you could get my attention real quick and that would be to abuse my bride. I love my wife. And, I’m not as good a man as I used to be, but if you fool with my bride—God gives me the strength—I’ll put you on the ground as quick as I can. If that’s what it takes to make you leave her alone, because she is my bride and I would die for her.

The church is the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ bought with His blood. The Bible says, We are his body, we are his bride and how dare anybody say that I am saved—born again—and I don’t love the brethren, I don’t love the church. Oh, I know all the brethren are not lovely. They are not all lovely. Do you ever get vexed with some of the members of your own family? I do. Some of my family members vex me, I’m sure I never vex them. But, sometimes the members of my family vex me. They upset me, they irritate me, but I love them. Church members may vex us sometimes. They irritate us. Sometimes we have disagreements. To dwell there above with those that we love, that will be glory. But, to live here below with those that we know, that’s another story, isn’t it? But, we still love them. We love them. We love them because the nature of God is in us and the nature of God is love. And, one of the ways that know that I’m saved is folks and it may sound corny, but I love you. I love the church of the Lord Jesus Christ and I love all Christians everywhere that I meet them. That’s one of the birthmarks of

the believers.

### III. The Commitment Test

There is the commandment test and there is the companion test. I want to give you the third test that John talks about here. And, it is what I want to call the commitment test. Look if you will now beginning in 1 John chapter 5 and verse 10, *“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may”*—here it is again—*“know that ye have eternal life”* (1 John 5:10–13).

Now, Pastor, why did you call this the commitment test? Why didn't you call it the belief test? Because John talks about those that believe. Well, I could have called it the belief test, but here's the reason why I didn't. Our English word “believe” is not quite as strong as the Greek word here. For example, we believe intellectually that George Washington was the father of our country and that he lived and he was a historical character. I believe in George Washington, but I do not trust him for anything. I am not committed to George Washington. But, when I believe in Jesus Christ, I trust Him for something and I am committed to Him for something. Do you understand? And, the Bible word “believe” here means commitment. It means trust. Now, the question is, are you believing on Jesus Christ?

Now, I want to say something here and I want you to pay attention because somebody is liable to misquote me or misunderstand what I am saying. So, lend me your ears and listen. Nowhere that I can find does the Bible tell us to look back to some experience for the assurance of our salvation. The Bible doesn't deal with what happened to you in the past for assurance. This is in the present tense. *“These things have I written unto you that believe...”*—not believed, but believe (1 John 5:13). It is present tense, those who believe right now. That's the way that you can have assurance.

You say, “Well Pastor, why are you putting it that way? Why take this time to explain that?” I'll tell you why. Listen to me folks, have you ever been our soul winning, going door-to-door, that person hasn't darkened the door of a church for forty years. They are living a lifestyle that is un-Christlike. And, you try you find out they are Baptist or something like that and you try to get them back to church and service to the Lord. You might as well be talking to a stonewall and you say to yourself, “Well I know what this problem is they just need to be saved.” And, so you start to try to lead them to Christ and they say, “Oh, wait a minute now, I am saved. I was saved back yonder in Mt.

Pisgah Baptist Church when I was a nine-year-old boy. I remember walking down the aisle and giving my heart to Jesus.” Mister, let me tell you something. Nowhere in the Bible will you ever find that thing as proof of salvation. The question is not what you did as a nine-year-old boy. I want to find out if you are saved as the person right now sitting in that seat this morning, believing in Jesus Christ. Not what you did in the past, friend, if you did believe you still will believe. And, if you are believing, you did believe. But, the proof right now is in the present tense. And, the same thing is true about commandment keeping. He didn’t say, “he that kept his commandments.” It says, “he that keeps his commandment” (1 John 2:3). It doesn’t say he that loved the brethren. It says, “he that loves the brethren” (1 John 3:14). And, the proof dear friend, is right now. Do you have that faith in your heart? Is there that trust and commitment to Jesus Christ right now? You see, 1 John chapter 5 and verse 10 says, “*He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself...*” (1 John 5:10). There’s the witness—not what happened in the past.

I’ve heard people say, “Well mister, if you can’t name the day, the place, and the hour where you were saved, you’re not saved.” Have you ever heard that? Sure you have. I’ve heard it too, but I’ve never read it in the Bible. And, neither have you. Now, if you have a day, a place, and an hour where you were saved that’s fine, that’s good, and that’s wonderful. And, I want to hasten to say there was a day, there was a place, there was an hour or you never were saved. But, listen folks, the evidence that happened is sitting there in that seat this morning. Then don’t go telling me about what happened in the past. You understand what I am saying? It’s like being born.

Did you know that there are folks who don’t know when they were born because there was no birth record? Will Rogers was a man like that. Will Rogers went to apply for a passport and they said, “We need your birth certificate.” He said, “Well, what do you need my birth certificate for?” They said, “For proof of your birth.” He said, “Well I’m here ain’t I?”

Now, folks, let me tell you something. The person who is here this morning is the best proof I know of whether you are saved or lost. I mean is that person sitting in that seat this morning? Is he a person committed to the commandments of Jesus Christ? That person sitting in the seat this morning is he a person whose heart is overflowing with love for Christ and the church. That person who is sitting in that seat this morning is this a person who now has that confidence, that faith, and that commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord of Lords and King of Kings? That’s the person John says that can say, “I know that I am saved.” Thank God for the past. Thank God for those who can name the day, the place, the hour, the point, and the dirty spot on the rug where they got saved. Wonderful! But, friend, the question John says is in the present tense. He who now believes on the Son of God. He’s the one who has the right to say he has eternal life.

## Conclusion

I preached this message this morning for two reasons. I preached it first of all to help those of you who are saved, but maybe who have had some doubts to get it together. But, I preached it for another reason. I don't want to give false assurance to some people who have never been saved. One of the devil's favorite tricks is to get your name on a church roll without you ever having been born again. And, if you've got strong and serious doubts, I don't want you to stonewall the Holy Spirit this morning. I don't want you to put on a facade because folks, the things that I'm dealing with this morning are crucial. I'm not talking to you about some little peccadillo and I'm not talking to you about some denominational preference. I'm talking to you about eternal life. A hundred million years from now what I'm talking about this morning will still be important. Do you know that you are saved?

Now, if you have strong reason to doubt your salvation this morning or put it the other way, if you don't have strong reason to know that you are saved I'm going to ask you to get it settled today. I'm going to ask you when we sing an invitation hymn to leave your seat and come forward. Your coming forward will be your way of saying, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I am willing this morning to commit my life to Him by faith and trust Him once and for all now and forever as my Lord and Savior. I want to invite Him into my heart and into my life." And, He will save you.

And, friend I want to tell you that loving the brethren and keeping the commandments is not something you do in order to get saved. They're something you do because you are saved. They are birthmarks that you've received Christ as your personal Savior. But, they are birthmarks. They are indications that you have been saved. John says, "That's the way you can know." So I'm going to ask you to come.

# How to Be Saved and Know It

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 25, 1993

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 John 5:1, 11–13

*“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”*

1 JOHN 5:13

## Outline

Introduction

- I. How We Are Saved
- II. The Traits of the Twice-Born
  - A. The Lordship Test
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    - 2. The Nature of the Church
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Today, I want you to take God’s Word and turn with me please to 1 John chapter 5. And, in a moment, we’re going to begin reading in verse 11. Now, this is the second message in a series entitled “Back to the Basics.” There’s a story told—I don’t know whether it is true or not. But, Vince Lombardi, whose Green Bay Packers were not doing very well—that’s a football team, ladies—and it’s said that in practice, Vince Lombardi said to the boys, “We’re going back to the basics.” And, he picked up a football and said, “Gentleman, this is a football.” One of the boys said, “Give it to us again, coach.” Now, what we’re going to do is go back to the very basics. Last week, we talked about how we know the Bible is the Word of God.” Today, we’re going to be talking about how to be saved and know it.

I was in the hospital. A lady was dying, her family around the bed. It was one of those tense and sad moments. Someone said, “She’s not ready to die. She doesn’t know the Lord. She’s not saved.” And, I said, “May I have an opportunity to speak with her?” And, very gently and courteously, I said, “I’d like to talk to you about the Lord. Would you like to know that...how you can be certain that you’re going to Heaven?” She

said, “I really would.” And so, I shared the gospel. I told her how Christ died for our sins and paid her sin debt, and I told her that if she would by faith receive the Lord Jesus, she can be saved, forgiven, and on her way to Heaven with divine certainty. She said, “Oh, I want that,” and I led her in prayer. And, she prayed and asked Christ to come into her heart, forgive her sin, to save her eternally. And, I turned to the family. The son-in-law was there, and I said to him, “Isn’t it wonderful that she has been saved?” Do you know what he said to me? “Oh,” he said, “no one can know that they’re saved.” I said, “Oh, yes they can.” He said, “No, no, no, no. The best that a person can do is to say, ‘I hope that I’m saved.’” And then, I shared with him a verse of Scripture; it’s the scripture we’re going to read for our text today.

I want you to look at it—1 John chapter 5, beginning in verse 11: *“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life”*—and then, here’s the verse. Look at it clearly and plainly—*“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may”*—now, you help me. What’s the next word?—*“know”*—K-N-O-W—*“that ye may know that ye have eternal life”* (1 John 5:11–13). Not think, not guess, not hope, not surmise, not wonder, but know with a rock-ribbed assurance that you have eternal life. Every Christian ought to have this privilege. You ought not to be a question mark with your head all bent over, wondering whether you’re saved. You ought to be an exclamation point standing up straight and tall, saying, “Thank God. I know if I died right now, I would go to Heaven. And, I know that I’m living this day in the power of the Holy Spirit, who lives in me, because I have been redeemed—I have been saved—by His power divine.” You ought not to be a doubting Christian; you ought to be a shouting Christian. You ought not to have a “hope-so salvation”; you ought to have a “know-so salvation.” And, this verse tells us that we can know it: *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that [you] may know”* (1 John 5:13).

But also, these verses tell us that we can doubt, because if we couldn’t doubt, why would John have written this? John is writing this that those who might doubt will not doubt. So, if you have doubts, that doesn’t mean that you’re not saved; it could mean that you’re not saved, but it doesn’t necessarily mean that you’re not saved. You can be saved and have doubts.

Let’s just take a test. How many of you have ever had any doubts? Let me see your hands. Well, that’s most of us—most of us. *Like this...* You didn’t want to say, “I really doubted,” so you’re kind of *like this*. We know that doubts come. Doubt is to your spirit what pain is to your body. Doesn’t mean you’re dead; it means something’s wrong. As a matter of fact, dead people don’t feel any pain. The doubt there is, in a sort of a strange sense, a backward affirmation of faith. You only doubt that which you believe. And so,

it's possible to have doubts, or John would not have written this. But, it's also wonderful to have assurance, and that's why he did write it. *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life"* (1 John 5:13).

Now, the assurance of your salvation is extremely important. We're not talking here about denomination preference. We're not talking here about little idiosyncrasies of doctrine. We're not talking here about political opinions. We're not talking here about matters that only count in this world. We're talking about eternal life. We're talking about your soul. When God made you, God breathed into your nostrils the breath of life, and you became a living soul. You could no more cease to exist than God Himself could cease to exist. Your soul will go on endless, timeless, dateless, measureless—either in Heaven or in Hell. How important it is, therefore, that you absolutely know that you're saved! And so, I want us to think a little bit, first of all, about how we are saved. And then, what are the results, what are the proofs, what are the evidences that this has taken place?

## **I. How We Are Saved**

We're in chapter 5. Look in chapter 5 and verse 1 here, if you will—1 John 5 and verse 1: he says, *"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God"* (1 John 5:1). "To be born of God" is another way of saying "being saved." It's being born again. And, it's very clear and very plain: the way that you are saved is by believing that Jesus is the Christ, that Jesus—the name *Jesus* means "Jehovah saves"—is the Messiah. You believe that—you trust that—and something happens: you are born again. You say, "Is it just that simple, Pastor Rogers?" It's just that simple. It is gloriously simple, but it's simply glorious. Acts 16, verse 31 says it again the same way: *"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"* (Acts 16:31). Friend, it's not so high that few can reach it; it's really so low that few get down to it. It is so plain; it is so simple: we're saved by trust in the Lord Jesus.

Now, this word *believe* doesn't mean just intellectual belief. The devils believe like that. But, it's a word that means "trust" and "commitment." I think it's clearly delineated in another verse, and this one I'd like for you to turn to; and then, we'll spend the rest of our time in 1 John. But, I really want you to look at this one over in Ephesians chapter 2. It's so clear, so plain—Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8 and 9. God makes it so abundantly clear because He wants you to be saved. And so, God here tells us not only what does save us, but what does not save us. And, here's what he says. Are you listening? *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"* (Ephesians 2:8–9).

All right, are you ready to look up here? Do you see my blackboard up here? You



can't see it? Well, it's there. Just imagine it's there. See this chalk? We're going to write on this side of the blackboard what does not save us, okay? Now, you look in Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9, and tell us what does not save us. He says, "*For by grace are [you] saved through faith; and that not of your*"—what? All right, I'm writing up here "self." All right, self cannot save. Do you see it? And then, he goes on, and he says—"*[and] not of works, lest any man should boast*" (Ephesians 2:8–9). W-O-R-K-S—works. All right, there it is: self and works—do you see?—that can't save. Do you see that? Self and works can't save.

Now, let's come over here on this board, and let's write what does save us. "*For by*"—what?—"grace"—G-R-A-C-E—"are ye saved through"—what?—"faith" (Ephesians 2:8)—F-A-I-T-H. There you have it. Now folks, it's just that plain; it's just that clear. Actually, it's more clear than that, all right, because you can't see that, but you can read it right there on your page.

Now, you say, "Well, everybody knows that." No, they don't. If you were to walk down the streets of this city, or any city, and say, "Are you saved and on your way to Heaven," do you know what most folks would say? They would say, "Well, I hope so. I think so. I am doing the best I can. I"—self—"am doing"—works—"the best I can." Isn't that right? So, no wonder they don't have assurance. How could you have assurance if it depended upon what you do? *I wouldn't trust the best 15 minutes I ever lived to get me into Heaven.* "I am doing the best I can." Self and works—that's what the average person is doing. They think that God is like Santa Claus—making a list, checkin' it twice, going to find out who's naughty or nice—that you're going to die and come to the Judgment, and somehow He's going to put everything in the balances. And, if your good works outweigh your bad works, He'll say you made it. And, if your bad works outweigh your good works, He'll say you didn't make it, and that you're going to Hell. Now, you'd be amazed how many people believe that, folks—they believe that.

Now, over in contradistinction to that is what God says. God says over here, "*For by grace*" (Ephesians 2:8). Now, what is grace? Grace is the unmerited favor and love that God shows to sinners such as we. It's what made God love us when we were unlovely. *God doesn't love us because we're valuable; we're valuable because He loves us.* He just loves us out of grace. It's what sent Jesus to die for us. "*God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). Friend, that is grace—that is amazing grace. "*For by grace are ye saved through*"—what?—"faith" (Ephesians 2:8).

Now, grace... Let's have a little acrostic: G-R-A-C-E—that's **G**od's **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist's **E**xpense. That's grace, okay? Now, what is faith? F-A-I-T-H—**F**orsaking **A**ll, **I** **T**rust **H**im. Faith is not intellectual belief. That's only part of it. Faith is trust, commitment. Now, that's what saves. "*For by grace are ye saved through faith*" (Ephesians 2:8). **Think of**

grace as the hand of God reaching down out of Heaven, and God says, “I love you; I want to save you.” Think of faith as your hand reaching up to God. Now, God puts down the hand of grace. You put up the hand of faith. And, when you put your hand of faith in God’s hand of grace, that’s salvation. “*For by grace are ye saved through faith*” (Ephesians 2:8). Do you have it?

Now, the devil doesn’t want you to understand that. The devil wants you to think it’s part of what you do and part of what God does. But friend, if any part of it depends upon what you do, you’ll never have assurance—isn’t that right?—because you’ll always wonder, “Am I doing enough?” But, when it all depends on what God does, then you can have assurance. You say, “Adrian, do you know you’re saved?” Well, of course I do. You say, “Well, you have a lot of confidence in yourself.” No, I don’t have any confidence in myself. That’s how I know I am saved. If I had confidence in myself, I could not know it. My confidence is in the grace of God.

Now, the devil never gives up very easily. So, the devil will say this: he’ll say, “Now, wait a minute, folks. Really, the truth is like everything else. It’s some of each. It’s part of works and part of faith. And so,” he says, “it’s grace and works.” You can hear people say it: “you do your part, and God does His.” Now, doesn’t that sound so good? They say, “It’s like crossing a stream in a rowboat: if you just take this oar and pull on this oar—and we’ll call this oar ‘faith’—you just go around in a circle this way. But, if you pull this oar—we’ll call this one ‘works’—you just go around in a circle this way. But,” they say, with a big smile on their face, “faith and works together—that gets you across.” Doesn’t that sound good? There’s just one thing wrong with that illustration, and it is this: we are not going to Heaven in a rowboat.

Now friend, listen: we’re going to Heaven by the grace of God. In Romans 11, verse 6 it says, “*And if by grace...it is no more...works: otherwise grace is no more grace*”—then, he goes on to say—“*[And] if it [is by] works...it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work*” (Romans 11:6). What does that mean—in Romans 11:6? It’s not part grace and part works—that’s impossible. It is all of grace. When you put your hand of faith in God’s hand of grace—when you say, “God, I’m a sinner. I’m lost. I cannot save myself. I don’t deserve to be saved. ‘In my hand, no price I bring. Simply to thy cross I cling’ (Augustus M. Toplady). Lord, I am trusting You to save me”—when you do that, when you say that, hallelujah—you’re saved! “*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God*” (1 John 5:1).

## **II. The Traits of the Twice-Born**

Okay, now, having said that, however, what is the result? What are the traits of the twice born? What are the birthmarks of the believer? Now, this little book of 1 John was written to give you assurance, and the word *know*—K-N-O-W—is mentioned almost 40

times in this epistle. Now, he mentions ways that we can know that we have been born again. I want to just take them and reduce them down to three, because basically all of those 40 can come down, basically, to three basic things. So, I want you to take the test today. Are you ready to take the test? The assurance test—to find out whether or not you have any right to say, “Yes! Praise God! I know I’m saved.”

### **A. The Lordship Test**

The very first test is the Lordship test: Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your life? Look in 1 John chapter 2, verses 3 and following—1 John chapter 2, and let’s begin in verse 3: *“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments”*—now, he doesn’t say that we are saved by keeping the commandments. No, no, salvation is a gift of God. It says we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments—*“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him”* (1 John 2:3–4). Now, one thing about the Apostle John—he doesn’t beat around the bush. You don’t have to... You’re not using esoteric terms here. If you say that you are saved, if you say that you know God and you’re not keeping His commandments, God says you are a liar.

“Now,” you say, “Pastor Rogers, wait a minute. Are you telling me if I ever break any of God’s commandments, then that means that I’m not saved?” No, I’m not saying that, because there’s not a one of us that has not failed and sinned in some time, some way, some manner, after we’ve been saved. Isn’t that true? All of us have, and John understands that. Go back to chapter 1, verse 10: *“If we say that [we’ve] not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us”* (1 John 1:10). Well, that’s past tense. We say, “Yes, that’s past tense.” But now, look in chapter 2, verse 1: *“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not”*—there’s the standard: don’t sin. But, he says—*“And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”* (1 John 2:1). He’s saying, “It is possible that you can sin and need an advocate, need Jesus Christ to come and help you, as a child of God, to get cleansed from your sin.” And yet, he goes on to say in verse 3: *“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments”* (1 John 2:3). So, what is the answer to this riddle? On the one hand, the Bible says we know that we’re saved because we keep the commandments. On the other hand, it says it’s possible for us to sin. The key is in this word *keep*. Look at the word *keep* in chapter 2, verse 3: *“we...know that we know him, if we keep his commandments”* (1 John 2:3).

Now, among other ways this word was used, it’s the word that a sailor would use, a navigator, back in this day, when they sailed by the stars at nighttime. The sailor could keep his course by keeping the stars. That’s what they called “sailing by the stars.” They would plot the heavens. And, the man with his chart would look at the heavens and

keep his hand on the wheel, and he would sail by the stars. And, that was called “keeping the stars.” That is the goal. The way he steered was by the stars. He’s “keeping the stars.” Now, to you, as a child of God, those stars are the commandments of God. That is what you steer your life by. That is the guide, the goal, of your life: you keep the commandments. Now, a sailor might go to sleep at the wheel. He might get distracted. He might have his attention diverted. He might get blown off course. These things could happen. But, when he recognizes it, he goes right back on course, because it’s not the desire of his life to get off course. The desire of his life is to steer according to that course, and that’s the way it is with a child of God: yes, sometimes we get blown off course; yes, sometimes we take our eyes from the stars; yes, sometimes we may fail; yes, sometimes we may over-steer or under-steer—but the great desire of our life is to keep the commandments of God.

And, John says, “If that desire is not in your life, you need to get saved—you need to get saved.” Just that plain and that simple—you’re not saved by keeping the commandments; you’re saved by the grace of God. But, one of the birthmarks that a child has been saved is that he has this desire to live according to the commandments. That’s the Lordship test. Jesus said, *“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things [that] I say?”* (Luke 6:46). You see, the Bible says, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Acts 16:31). And, there’s no such thing as saying, “I want Christ as Savior, but I don’t want Christ as Lord.” That’s impossible. You believe on the Lordship of Jesus. You make Christ the Lord of your life. He’s already Lord, but you make Him your Lord. You receive Him as your Lord.

You say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, do you mean to say that you don’t sin anymore?” No, I sin, but I tell you, there’s a difference after I got saved than there was before I was saved. Before I got saved, I was running to sin. Now, I’m running from it. That’s the major difference. I’m going to tell you something else: if you’re a member of this church or any body’s church, and you can sin willfully, consciously, continually, without any remorse, without any regret, without any repentance, with no compunction—you are just living a sinful life—it is my duty to assure you that you are not saved; it is my solemn responsibility to tell you that you are in for a rude awakening at the final judgment. *“Hereby [do] we...know that we know him, if we keep his commandments”* (1 John 2:3). Is that the burning desire of your heart? It is if you’ve met the Christ of Calvary. It is if you have been born of God. That’s the Lordship test.

## **B. The Fellowship Test**

Now, we’re going to take another test—not only the Lordship test; the second test here in 1 John is the fellowship test—the fellowship test. Now, let me show you what John has to say about that. If you would please, turn to 1 John chapter 3, and look in verse

14: *"We know"*—that's our word again—*"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death"* (1 John 3:14). That's what John says.

Now again, turn, if you will, to 1 John chapter 4 and verse 20: *"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, [he's] liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also"* (1 John 4:20–21).

Then, look in chapter 5, verse 1: *"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat"*—that is, "every one who loves the Father"—*"loveth him [also] that [is begotten of] him"* (1 John 5:1). When you love the Heavenly Father, you love His children—you love your brothers and sisters in Christ. It's one of the traits of the twice born; it's a test. You see, when you get saved, you want to be with the children of God, and you want to be right with the children of God.

Now, there are some people who say, "Well, I can just worship God all by myself. I don't need to go to church. God knows my heart. God knows I love Him. I don't need to assemble together with the brethren." Well, then why did God say, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25)? Why did God keep on telling us that when we love Him, we are to love the brothers and the sisters—we are to love the brethren? You see, here's the reasoning. I want you to listen very carefully: Why is fellowship a test of your salvation?

### **1. The Nature of the Christian**

Well, what happens when you get saved is this: you receive the divine nature, don't you? The Bible says we are made *"partakers of the divine nature"* (2 Peter 1:4). Now, what is the nature of God? The nature of God is love. Turn with me to 1 John chapter 4, and look, if you will, in verse 7: *"Beloved"*—this is 1 John 4:7—*"Beloved, let us love one another"*—now, watch this; listen to it—*"for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. [And] he that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love"* (1 John 4:7–8). Now, you don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure this out. When you're born again, you're born of God. The Holy Spirit of God comes into you, and you are made a partaker of the divine nature.

Now, what is the divine nature? *"God is love"* (1 John 4:8). Now, if that nature is in you, then you're going to have love in you, right? Now, if you don't have love in you, you have not become a partaker of the divine nature. And, he's not talking here about loving God alone; he's talking about loving one another: *"for God is love"* (1 John 4:8). And so, it would be absurd for you to say, "I have been born of God. I have the Holy Spirit in me. The nature of God is in me. I have been born of God, but I just don't love." No, friend, there must be the Lordship test, and there is the fellowship test. It's right there just as plain as can be. Now, you're not saved because you love the brethren; you're saved



because Jesus died for you on that cross. But, you love the brethren because you are saved—you love the brethren because you're saved. You see, love is the nature of the Christian because it's the nature of God.

## 2. The Nature of the Church

And, I'll tell you another reason that you must pass the fellowship test: not only is it the nature of the Christian, but it is the nature of the Church. What is the Church? The Church—I'm not talking about the building now; I'm talking about the Church, the people—the Church is the Body of Christ, and the Church is the Bride of Christ. In the Bible, the Bible uses this analogy. The Bible says the Church is like a body. Christ is the head, and all of us are members of that body, right (Colossians 1:18)? Well, if you love Jesus, you can't just love the head without loving the body.

If you said, "Adrian, I love your head, but I really don't mind stepping on your body," that won't make my head too happy. And, if you say, "Well, Adrian, I love you, but I don't love your wife, Joyce," well, Joyce is my bride. And, not only is the Church Jesus's body; it is Jesus's bride. And so, if you love me, love Joyce. And, if you want to get my attention in a hurry, abuse her, and I'll guarantee you'll have my attention—my full attention. I mean, as quick as I can get there, you'll have my full attention. Maybe in some ways you wouldn't want it, because she is my beloved; she's my bride.

Now, the Church is the Body of Christ, and the Church is the Bride of Christ. And, that's the reason that if we love the Lord Jesus, it follows as night follows day we are going to love what Jesus loves. Christ and the Church are not identical, but Christ and the Church are inseparable. He's the head; we're the body. He's the groom; we're the bride. He's the building; we are the foundation. And, it's all in the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. And so, if you are a Christian and yet you're not in fellowship with a New Testament, Bible-believing church—I mean organized fellowship; I don't mean a once-in-a-while visitor. I mean a part of the Body of Christ—maybe you need to ask yourself this question: "Am I truly saved, or am I just been playing at this thing? Have I been saying I have believed in Christ and trusted Christ, but have I really, really met the Christ of the Bible?" Now, you may be saved, and be in such a backslidden condition that you don't love people. But, if you're in that backslidden condition, you have no real right to say you know you're saved. The only way that you can say that you know you're saved is when you have these birthmarks of the believer. Just some intellectual *la-tee-dah*—that's not enough to do it.

## C. The Relationship Test

All right. Now, let me give you the third test; here's the third test. And, of these three tests... The first test, the Lordship test: "*He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar*" (1 John 2:4). The second test, the fellowship test: You say, "I

love Him and know Him,” and you love not the brethren, you’re a liar. Now, here’s the third test, and it is the relationship test. The Lordship test, the fellowship test, and the relationship test.

Now, salvation is a vital relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, go back to 1 John chapter 5, and look in verse 11—1 John chapter 5 and verse 11: *“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son”*—now, just underscore that. Who is God’s Son? The Lord Jesus—*“this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God”* (1 John 5:11–13). Now, he’s talking here about a relationship with Jesus. He’s talking about having the Son, knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. In another place he says that God’s Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16). There’s that inner witness; there’s that relationship with Jesus Christ. Now, 1 John chapter 5, verse 13 says this—and listen very, very carefully: *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God”* (1 John 5:13). It does not say, “These things have I written unto you that believed”—past tense. This is present tense.

Now, I’m going to say something here that may upset some of you. It may upset some of your theology. I’ve often heard it said that if you cannot name the time, the place, where you were saved, you’re not saved. Have you ever heard that? Let me see your hand if you’ve ever heard that: “if you can’t name the time, the place, you were never saved.” Well, there’s just one thing wrong with that, friend: it’s not in the Bible. Somebody made that up, but it’s not in the Bible. The Bible never tells you to look back to a past experience for the proof of your salvation. It does not say, “He who *believed* has eternal life.” It says, “He who *believes*.”

Now, it doesn’t matter what you’ve done in the past—if you’re not believing on Jesus, you’re not saved. And, if you are believing on Jesus, you did believe on Jesus, because it’s impossible to be believing on Him without having believed on Him. You see, indeed there was a time; indeed, there was a place. There had to be if you are believing on Jesus. But, if you’re not believing on Jesus now, whatever you call the time and the place, there’s something wrong with it. **What is the biggest question: Did you get married, or are you married? Well, if you are married, I guarantee it you did get that way, right? And, the big question is not, did you believe in Jesus? The big question is, are you believing in Jesus? Do you have a relationship with the Son of God right now?** Is the man, the woman, the boy, the girl, sitting in that seat right now, this morning, believing on Christ as his or her personal Savior? Now, if you have the time and the place, wonderful. I can remember the time and the place. But, if you don’t, that doesn’t



mean you're not saved, because if you're trusting Jesus right now, you are. I mean, you may not know exactly when it happened.

Let me use this illustration. Suppose you leave this service, and you're going to go to Birmingham by airplane. And, you get in the airplane out here at the Memphis International Airport, and you fly to Birmingham and get off the airplane. Now, did you cross the state line? Of course you did! Did you know when you crossed the state line? No, you didn't know it. Why? Because you were up there in the air. You didn't know when you crossed the state line. Now, let's suppose you get in your automobile, and you drive to Birmingham. You cross the state line. Do you know it? Yes, because there it is—a clear line: “Welcome to Alabama,” and so forth. You crossed the state line. Now, both persons crossed the state line, or you, as one person, crossed the state line two separate ways. Now, the question is simply this: How do you know you crossed the state line? One of the best ways I know is if you get out of the plane in Birmingham, you did, right? I mean, you did. If you get out at the Birmingham Airport, beyond a shadow of any doubt, you had to have crossed that line. And, if the person sitting in this auditorium right now is saying, “With all of my heart and soul, I am trusting Jesus. I may not know exactly when it happened, but I know now that person right here in this seat this morning has a relationship with the Son of God”...

You see, it is not some distant experience that you had. It is a present reality. It is a relationship, not theology. You say, “Well, I know the plan of salvation.” Well, you're not saved by the plan of salvation; you're saved by the man of salvation. His name is Jesus. The life is in Christ. Are you trusting the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you have that vital relationship with Him right now?

They tell a story about Will Rogers (no relation to me). I guess I wish he was. But, Will Rogers, that Oklahoman who philosophized, he wanted to get a passport, and he went in for a passport. And, they said, “Well, we need your birth certificate.” He said, “What do you need that for?” They said, “For proof of your birth.” He said, “Well, I'm here, ain't I?” Well, friend, what he was saying is that what is standing there right now is more important than what may have happened some long time ago. Indeed, there was a time when he was born, but the proof that he was born is he is standing there, indeed. “He that believeth on Jesus is born of God” (1 John 5:1), but the proof is that you are believing on Him right now as your personal Savior and Lord.

## Conclusion

Now, the end of the message—let me say this: it is possible that you could be saved and not have that full assurance. If I were in your case today, do you know what I would do? I would do exactly what I did, because I had done that as a teenage boy. I was saved—I think I was. I'm not certain even yet whether I was or not, but I just got it

settled. You see, I was not fully instructed when I gave my heart to Christ, and I rode a roller coaster for a long time, wondering whether or not I was truly saved. I remember stopping one night on the corner of 39<sup>th</sup> Street and Calvin Avenue in West Palm Beach. By then I had learned something about the Bible. I looked straight up into the heavens. I said, “God, I’ve got to have assurance. I don’t know whether I am lost—and the Holy Spirit has me under conviction—or whether I’m saved, and the devil is trying to make me doubt it. But, one thing I know, dear God, I want to get certain tonight. You said, if I would believe on You, if I would trust You, You would save me.” So, I just turned my face up to the heavens, and I said, “Lord, right now, with all of my heart, as much as in me is, once and for all, now and forever, I trust You to save me. If I was saved, I still am. But, if I wasn’t, I am now”—just driving down a peg. And, I want to say that from that time on, a river of peace began to flow in my heart, and it’s still flowing.

And, if you’ve had those serious doubts—maybe you’ve not understood; maybe you’ve tried to kind of mix in some works. You didn’t know that a person could truly know it—maybe you’d like to do the same thing today. Maybe you’d just like to come forward in this service and tell one of our ministers today, “I’m going to put down a stake. I’m going to get it settled once and for all, and say, ‘I know that I know that I’m saved.’”

“Well,” you say, “Pastor, you know, I did that, and I still have doubts.” Do you know what’s wrong with you? You’ve got some un-confessed, some un-dealt-with sin in your life. And, God won’t let you have assurance until you deal with that. One of those two things is true about you. And so, maybe you need to come this morning and say, “You know, I’m just going to give everything to Jesus. I’m tired of playing church. I’m going to give it all to Him because I want that blessed assurance. I want to be able to say, ‘Blessd assurance, Jesus is mine! / O what a foretaste of glory divine!’” (Fanny Crosby).

# Getting an Upper Hand on the Underworld

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** Unknown

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 John 5:4–5

*“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”*

1 JOHN 5:4

## Outline

Introduction

I. The World: The External Foe

II. The Flesh: The Internal Foe

III. The Devil: The Infernal Foe

Conclusion

## Introduction

I do not know a more exciting concept, believe me, than the incredible power of kingdom authority. You know, our Christian life begins with a miracle, that miracle is what? The new birth and it concludes with a miracle. Jesus is coming in power and great glory and we're going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And we have a miracle to start with, a commencing miracle, and a concluding miracle but the problem is that many of us are missing the middle miracle. The middle miracle is this that we are to reign in life. We're to reign, we're to rule in life that's what the Bible says. We are to reign in life by Christ Jesus.

Now what King can reign without authority? You need authority. And what kind of authority would a King have? Kingdom authority. And one of the greatest discoveries that you can make is to understand the incredible power of kingdom authority. If there's one lesson that I could teach my children it would be this. It would be that you would discover the incredible power of kingdom authority. Many Christians are victims rather than victors and they are living in defeat and disillusionment and disgrace and they don't have any hope. They think they're just going to have to tough it out and hold the fort til Jesus gets here. They remind me of a cat who had his tail stepped on so many times that when somebody would come in the room he'd just turn around and stick it out and wait expecting for somebody to step on it, thinking that's the only way that he could ever

live in this life.

Now I'm going to give you the whole thing up front: God gave Adam dominion and he lost it. Jesus bought it back and He has given it to us. Now all of it is not yet given to us. There are some things that are not yet put under our feet and we'll talk about that. There's some limits to our authority. For example, we can't curse cancer and cause it to die. We can't have authority over the wild beasts of the field, we'll talk about that in a little bit, but we do have authority over the world, the flesh, and the devil. You have no excuse for not living in victory. All that you need, all that I need, has been provided. The Scripture says in 1 John chapter 5, verses 4 and 5, the Bible says this, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world"—are you born of God, are you twice born—"whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

When you were born again you were born to win. You're not meant to be defeated. Now there is an enemy. Do you believe the devil is real? I was preaching one time, a little boy said to me, I was preaching on Satan, he said, "Pastor, when you were up there preaching I could see the devil just as clear." There is a devil and he's a real devil. He is called the Prince of Darkness. He is called the master of deception. He has many disguises and like most criminals he has many aliases. He is called an angel of light. Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, in verse 14, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."

Now he has many faces but he has one overmastering ambition and that is to receive worship, and adoration, and praise. He became the devil by saying, "I will be like the most high. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." Originally he was a shining angel. His name Lucifer means light bearer but Lucifer, the son of the morning, became Satan the father of the night as he rebelled against Almighty God.

Let me read to you who you're up against. Isaiah chapter 14, verses 12 and following: "How you have fallen from heaven, o morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain; I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit."

Now, Satan said, "I will exalt myself," and God said, "No you're not. You're going down, down, down." But while Satan has been vanquished from heaven, he still makes appearances in heaven, will talk about that, but he has been vanquished but he has not vanished. And we're up against the organized, mobilized, demonized, forces of hell and only ignorance would overlook the fact that there's a real devil. You have an enemy. He

wants to sabotage your life. The dynamite is in place and the fuse is laid, the match is struck. Your enemy is not the Democrats or the Republicans, your enemy is not the IRS, not your mother-in-law, your enemy is not the pornographer, your enemy is not the narcotics dealer, all of these are victims of the same enemy. Our enemy is the devil.

Now listen to what God's Word says, put it down, Ephesians 6 in verse 12: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood"—all of these that I just mentioned are flesh and blood—"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The reason that many of us don't live in victory, we never show up for the war. We're fighting the wrong enemy. Now, here's a question. Why are you Satan's enemy? You say, "I've never done anything to him. Why is his hatred for me so intense?" Well really you're just a pawn in a cosmic game of chess. Satan's real war is with God.

Now evil people have always known if you can't hurt someone, hurt someone that someone loves and you've hurt them anyway. God loves you and therefore by trying to harm you he is actually endeavoring to get at God. Now Satan has two chief weapons to use against you, the world and the flesh. Now if you take Satan, the world, and the flesh then you have that trinity of evil that we're up against, the world, the flesh, and the devil. And this study on kingdom authority is to show you how you can have, believe me this is not rhetoric this is absolute rock rib truth, how you can have victory, absolute victory, over the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Wouldn't you like to live in victory? I mean, honestly, would you not like to live in victory the way you hear that Christians are supposed to live? It's not a matter of emotionalism. It's not even a matter of your gritting your teeth and clinching your fist and saying I'm going to do it. It is bringing into your life a supernatural power that Jesus bought back for you when He hung on that cross in agony and blood.

## **I. The World: The External Foe**

Now let's look at this trinity of evil, the world. I call the world the external foe. It's the enemy that is out there. Now the Bible says, "Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the father's not in him." What does God mean when He says love not the world? Does He mean don't love the planet Earth? No, the planet Earth is good. When God created this world and flung it out into space, God said, "That's good, that's good." Don't you love nature? The rocks, the trees, the birds, the bees, the fleas, I mean, we love nature. Nature is a gift of God. Heaven above is soft or blue, earth beneath is sweeter green, something lives in every hue that Christ-less eyes have never seen, birds with sweeter songs or flow, flowers with greater glory shine, since I know as now I know I'm His and He is mine.

Jesus loved nature. Jesus said, “Consider the lilies how they grow.” So when the Bible says don’t love the world He’s not talking about the planet. “Oh,” you say, “No, He’s not talking about the planet, he must be talking about the people.” No, He loves the people also and so should you. What does John 3:16 say? “For God so loved”—the what?—“the world that He gave his only begotten son.” What world is He talking about? Jesus didn’t die for trees and rocks He died for people. And so, He’s not talking about the planet or the people. When the Bible says love not the world it uses a Greek word “cosmos” you’ve heard it before and the word cosmos means a system, an order of things, a way of doing things.

There is an ungodly system that the Bible calls the world that would squeeze you and mold you into its mold. That’s the reason the Apostle Paul said in Romans chapter 12, verse 2: “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” This world would conform you, squeeze you, mold you, and manipulate you. Now, when we think of the world sometimes we think of maybe a honky-tonk somewhere or we think of some gambling den or some saloon. The world may be very beautiful, very attractive, very alluring, legally very legitimate, and more people are worldly than we seem to think. Sometimes we call it a new world order. It’s not a new world order; it’s the old world order. It’s been around for a long, long time. It is a way of thinking. We could call it political correctness or we could call it conventional wisdom. We could even call it the good life but the Bible says it is of the world and it manipulates all of us more than we dare think. Another synonym for it would be Madison Avenue.

Now listen to what he says, we’re talking about 1 John chapter 2, verses 15 and 16, listen, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh.” Now what is the flesh? Sensual pleasures. Now the Bible is not against your feeling good but drugs, food, sex, alcohol, laziness, violence, inordinate amusement, all of these are part of the world that we would call sensual pleasures. That’s the lust of the flesh. But not only are there sensual pleasures, there are selfish possessions, that’s the lust of the eyes. Did you know that your eyes have an appetite? The Bible calls that the lust or the desire of the eyes. When we say, “feast your eyes on that,” it means, “look at that.” And our eyes will run away with you sometimes when you go to the mall, won’t they? You’re walking just kind of coasting through the mall and you see things that all of a sudden you think you need. And listen, a wise philosopher once said, “To whom little is not enough, nothing is enough.” Well that’s a mouthful. “To whom little is not enough, nothing is enough.”

Sensual pleasures, the lust of the flesh; selfish possessions, the lust of the eyes; and stubborn pride, the pride of life. How many of you have a problem with pride? Lift your hand. How many of you don’t have a problem with pride? Well I’m gonna speak to the first group a little bit, to the second group a whole lot. We all have a problem with pride. The human peacock in most instances is strutting to hell thinking he’s too good to

be damned. It is the pride of life. It has infected the human race. We all want to be the top banana, we all want to be the best, we all want to be noticed, we all want to strut. Sometimes we deny it but it has infected us all and it squeezes us into its mold. Sensual pleasures, selfish possessions, and stubborn pride. So that is the world and the world is the what, external foe. Say external. Okay.

## **II. The Flesh: The Internal Foe**

Now not only is there the world, the external foe, but there is the flesh and the flesh is the internal foe. Now what does the word flesh mean? Well the Greek word *sarks* can mean your skin and bones but as it's used here, the flesh has the idea of your old Adamic nature. Your flesh is not your hide, your hair, your skin, your bones, your muscles, your corpuscles, sinews, and all of that, that's all good. There's nothing evil about your body, did you know that? As a matter of fact, you are to present your body to God a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God. And 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19, says that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost of God. Most of us need to do a better job of temple maintenance. Amen. We do. So when the Bible uses the terms flesh, however, that word *sark's*, it talks about your old Adamic predisposition.

Did you know that you were born with an inclination to sin? Did you know the Bible says the wicked go astray from the womb, they go astray speaking lies from the womb, as soon as they're born they do that? That little rascal can make you think he needs changing when he only wants you to hold him. That's true. We have this evil disposition. Where do we get it? I got mine from my parents. Where'd they get it? From their parents. Where'd they get it? From their parents. I talked to a lady one time she said, "Oh you are a Rogers aren't you?" I said, "Yes ma'am." She said, "So am I." She said, "I've been doing some research into our background. You will be interested to know that our forefathers came over on the Mayflower." "Oh," I said, "Lady I've gone back further than that." "Oh," she said, "You have? Tell me about it." I said, "You will be interested to know we have descended from a crooked farmer and a drunken sailor. The farmer was Adam and the sailor was Noah." That's how far we all go back. We all go back to Adam and in Adam all die and we all have a pre-disposition to sin. It is on the inside. It is not the external foe it is the internal foe. It is an enemy within the gates of human nature and it does all sorts of mayhem.

I heard of a little boy who was being mean to his little sister and he called her a bad name, hit her with a broomstick, and then spat on her and the mother remonstrated with the naughty child and she said, "John you shouldn't have done that. The devil made you do that." He said, "Well the devil made me hit her with a broomstick and call her a bad name, but spitting on her was my idea." Listen, listen to me in all seriousness, we'll laugh it off but you'd be surprised how much of it is your idea. You can't blame the devil.



You can't say the devil made me do it. You have an enemy within the gates and I'm telling you this, if the devil were to suddenly be disintegrated, evaporate, obliterated, and gone, you'd still sin, you'd still sin, because you have a sinful nature and so do I. Apart from the grace of God none of us would have deliverance, none of us would have victory.

### **III. The Devil: The Infernal Foe**

So, there is this enemy who is the internal foe and then there is the infernal foe and that is the devil himself. Now see, there is the external foe that's the world trying to squeeze us in to its mold. There's the internal foe there's that old sinful disposition that all of us have that we were born with. We all have it. The Bible calls that the works of the flesh. And then there is the infernal foe the devil himself. Jesus called him in John 14, verse 30, the prince of this world. Paul called him the god of this world with a little "g."

Let me describe him to you. He is a consummate liar. He is spiritual but spiritually wicked. He is brilliant but brilliantly stupid. He is beautiful but hideously beautiful. If it were possible, he would deceive the very elect. Now there are some who are so sophisticated they don't believe he exists at all. They believe he's some kind of a comical mythical little character wearing a red union suit with pointy horns and a forked tail and a pitchfork trying to catch somebody bending over. So we call devil's food cake and deviled ham and we name ball teams demons and so forth because he's just a laughable character, some medieval superstition.

But there are other people who say they believe that he exists but they think somehow he's in hell and maybe he rules in hell. He is not in hell and when he gets there he will not rule and we're going to talk about that in a little bit. But he is an enemy, he is ruthless, he comes to obsess. Now I don't believe a Christian can be possessed but he comes to obsess and to depress and to defeat the children of God and he can do that. And if he had the unmitigated gall to come against our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, he'll come against you.

Now let me give you some of his names in the Bible. He is called the deceiver. He's called a liar. He's called a murderer. He's called the accuser of the brethren. He's called the tempter. He's called the prince of the power of the air. He's called the destroyer. He's called the evil one. He has many aliases, I've said before, but he has one overwhelming, overmastering ambition and that, friend, is to receive worship to himself and to bring shame to you. Now that's pretty much of a downer isn't it all I've said so far? Are you ready for some good news? Say amen.

All right, here is the good news. In the face of all of that we have kingdom authority. Now here's what Peter said in 1 Peter chapter 5, verses 8-10: "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.” You can defeat Satan’s schemes. You can have victory over the flesh. You can resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Sometimes people say to me, “I’m not afraid of the devil.” That’s not even the issue. Is the devil afraid of you? The Bible says resist the devil he will flee from you. Has it ever dawned on you that the devil should be running from you? Draw nigh to God; He’ll draw nigh to you. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

## Conclusion

Well, I’ll tell you a little story and we’ll wrap up this session. I have a friend who played linebacker for the Miami Dolphins, and I won’t call his name since I don’t have permission to use his name, but he was a great, great football player and he played for Auburn. Some of you may figure out who he is and he said that the coach at Auburn said, I’ll give you his first name, “Mike would you do some scouting for us?” He said, “Sure coach. What kind of a player do you want us to enlist at Auburn to play football?” He said, “Mike, you know that man you knock him down and he stays down?” Mike said, “We don’t want him do we coach?” He said, “No.” He said, “Then Mike there’s a guy you knock him down and he gets up and you knock him down again and he stays down.” Mike said, “We don’t want him either do we coach?” He said, “No.” But he said, “Mike there’s the man that you knock him down and he gets up, and you knock him down and he gets up, and you knock him down and he gets up.” Mike said, “That’s the guy we want isn’t it coach?” He said, “No, I want you to find that guy that’s knocking everybody down.”

Now listen, I am so glad that when we’re down Jesus lifts us up. I’m so glad that we can get up, but I tell you what, I’d like to do some knocking. I’d like to be the victor. I’d like to be the one that the devil is afraid off. I would like to understand what the Lord Jesus Christ has bought for us with what we call the incredible power of kingdom authority. We’ll talk about it more in the next session. Father, thank you for letting us be together and seal this to our heart. In the name of Jesus, amen.

# Why I Believe in Jesus

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: Unknown**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 5:4–13**

*“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”*

1 JOHN 5:13

## Outline

### Introduction

- A. Atheism Won't Meet Your Deepest Needs
- B. Philosophy Won't Meet Your Deepest Needs
- C. Materialism Won't Meet Your Deepest Needs
- D. Other Religions Won't Meet Your Deepest Needs
- E. Jesus Alone Can Meet Your Deepest Needs
- I. Historical Reasons
- II. Scriptural Reasons
  - A. Jesus Never Modified Anything He Said
  - B. Jesus Never Apologized for Anything
  - C. Jesus Never Asked Anyone for Advice
  - D. Jesus Never Asked Anyone to Pray for Him
  - E. Jesus Never Attempted to Justify His Behavior
  - F. Jesus Never Asked for Forgiveness
- III. Spiritual Reasons
  - A. The Spirit of God Witnesses to Me
  - B. The Spirit of God Witnesses in Me
  - C. The Spirit of God Witnesses Through Me
- IV. Personal Reasons
  - A. What I've Seen in the Lives of Others
  - B. What I've Experienced in My Own Heart

### Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God's precious Word, and turn with me, please, to 1 John chapter 5. I told you last night that I want to speak to you on this subject: "Why I Believe in Jesus." Now, believe it or not, I have never, ever really preached a sermon on this subject. I've preached many sermons telling people to believe in Jesus and preached many sermons about the Lord Jesus, but never specifically a sermon "Why I Believe in Jesus Christ." I had to

think it through, and I had to ask myself, “Just why do I believe in Jesus Christ? Are Christians fools for believing in Christ?” I heard about a man who said to his wife, “I was a fool when I married you.” She said, “Yes, but I didn’t notice it then.” Are we fools for believing in Jesus Christ, or do we have a basis for our belief?

I begin to read here in verse 4: *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he that came by water and blood, 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. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. 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. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God”* (1 John 5:4–13).

Everyone here tonight is a believer, but not everyone here tonight is a Christian. Some believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and others believe that He is not. We’re all believers. Everybody believes something. Nobody can live without believing something. Even the atheist is a believer: he believes there is no God. He can’t prove there is no God. If he says to me, “Prove there is a God,” I say, “Prove there is none.” He says, “Well, you just believe there’s a God.” I say, “I do, and I’ve got some mighty fine evidence. You just believe there is none, and your evidence is not so very good.” Everybody believes something, and everybody is fighting a battle. The battle is the world, and if you live in this world, I can tell you, whether you’re saved or lost, you’ve got some problems. *“Man that is born of...woman is...full of trouble”* (Job 14:1). If you got here any other way, you’re excused. But, *“man that is born of...woman”*—the Bible says—*“is full of trouble”* (Job 14:1). And, verse 4 speaks of that—the world—but it says, *“Whatsoever”*—or, *“whosoever”*—*“is born of God overcometh the world”* (1 John 5:4). And, those who believe in Jesus are the ones who are born of God.

Now, let me ask you this question very simply and very plainly: If you are not going to believe in Jesus, what are you going to believe in? Now, when Jesus had fed the 5,000, after He fed the 5,000, He began to talk to them about deeper, spiritual truths. And, some of His erstwhile followers began to leave Him. They left Him more or less like

rats would leave a sinking ship when He would talk to them about the deep things, the eternal varieties of life. And then, He turned to His disciples, and He said, “Will you also go away? Are you going, too?” And, Simon Peter said something very profound. He said, “Where can we go? To whom shall we go? You alone have the words of life” (John 6:68). My dear friend, if you do not believe in Jesus, let me ask you, where are you going? What you are going to do? Who are you going to believe in?

#### **A. Atheism Won't Meet Your Deepest Needs**

Are you going to turn to atheism—is that what you are going to believe in? If you're an atheist and you refuse to believe that *“in the beginning God created the [heavens] and the earth”* (Genesis 1:1), I'll tell you what you must believe—that in the beginning, the heavens and the earth created themselves and then created man. You can believe that if you want to. My dear friend, let me tell you something: atheism is not a sign of intelligence. Let me say this: that Socrates was no atheist. Bacon, who is the father of modern science, was no atheist. Galileo was no atheist. Newton was no atheist. Pasteur was no atheist. Even the great Einstein, though not a Christian, certainly was not an atheist. Wernher von Braun, the father of our modern space technology, certainly was no atheist. All of these believed in a power beyond them and a higher intelligence. No, you can't turn to atheism; that's not going to help you to overcome this world—not at all.

#### **B. Philosophy Won't Meet Your Deepest Needs**

“Well,” you say, “I'll be a believer, but I'm not a Christian. I'll just have some philosophy of life.” Do you think that a philosophy is going to meet the deepest needs of your heart? What is philosophy anyway? It's a system of thought that tells us what we already know in words we can't understand—that's all philosophy is. Schopenhauer was a great philosopher, and this is what he said: “Life is a curse of endless cravings and endless unhappinesses.” That's what he said it was. Now, dear friend, is that where you are going? What did Huxley say? Everybody talks about the great Huxley and his great mind. As he looked at the human race, he said, “It seems to me that we are a cancer on the globe.” Is that where you are going to go? Bertrand Russell (of better read than dead fame) said this: “Philosophy proved a washout to me.” H.G. Wells, the noted historian, said this: “Unless there is a more abundant scheme before mankind, this scheme of space and time is a bad joke, an empty mystery, braying across the eternities.” I like what our former pastor Robert G. Lee said about philosophy: “It's a chunk of cloudbank buttered with the night wind.” Is that where you are going to go? Are you going to turn to a chunk of cloudbank?

#### **C. Materialism Won't Meet Your Deepest Needs**

“Oh, well,” you say, “I'm just going to live for things—materialism.” Are you going to go

to materialism? Do you think you are going to overcome the world by materialism? If you were to go into the wealthiest homes in Memphis tonight, I'll guarantee you they would not necessarily be the happiest. Would you agree with that? Certainly. Now, wealth doesn't necessarily bring unhappiness, but it certainly doesn't bring happiness. And, the materialist—do you know what a materialist does? Do you know what the very best materialist has? I mean, if he has it all, the very best materialist has what I call a “good dog's life.” Now, if you give a dog a warm place to sleep, several good meals a day, a sense of conquest, a good cat to chase, and a little affection, scratch him behind the ears and let him slobber on you and wag his tail, he'll ask no more. I mean, that's all he wants. He's as happy—he'll be as content—as he can be. Now, if a man has all of these creature comforts and no more—he has a nice place to sleep, he has something good to eat, he has a sense of conquest (his business), he gets a little affection from his wife and kids—in all he has, that's a good dog's life. Now, my friend, it may satisfy a dog, but it won't satisfy you, because God made you for something more. That's the reason that men, when they make a lot of money, they still want more.

*They don't need the money; they're keeping score.*

*They're in a contest; they just want more (author unknown).*

Or, when a man climbs one mountain, he wants to climb another mountain. He races one car... He wants to do this; he wants to do that—always seeking and never finding.

#### **D. Other Religions Won't Meet Your Deepest Needs**

“Where are we going to go?” Peter said. “We can't go to atheism. We can't go to philosophy. We can't go to materialism.” You say, “Yes, but Adrian, there are a lot of other religions. They could go to one of these other religions.” Oh, is that right? Well, where are you going to go? Are you going to go to Confucianism? Are you going to go to Buddhism? Are you going to go to Islam? Is that where you are going to go? Well, if you decide that's where you are going to go, I want tell you that you are going to a dead end. And, I'll tell you why: if you'll go to old Confucius's tomb, you'll find that it's occupied; if you go to old Buddha's tomb, you'll find that it's filled, too; and if you go to Mohammed's tomb, you'll find it's there and that that old Mohammed is there. But, if you go to Jesus's tomb, it's empty, dear friend. No sense following a loser.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, distinct from all of these others, and I'm going to point that out in just a moment. You see, listen, you can take Buddha out of Buddhism. You can take Mohammed out of Islam and still have a Islam. You can take Confucius out of Confucianism and still have Confucianism. But, you can't take Jesus out of Christianity and still have Christianity. You see, He's not a way shower; He's the way. He doesn't just point to the light; He is the light. **To take Christ out of Christianity would be like taking the blue out of the sky, the water out of the well, and the music out of that**

piano. You don't have anything left when you take Christ out of Christianity.

## **E. Jesus Alone Can Meet Your Deepest Needs**

Listen to me—listen to me: Jesus Christ alone can satisfy the hunger in your heart. Jesus Christ alone gives meaning to life and death. Jesus Christ alone can take the sting out of sin, the pain out of parting, the gloom out of grave, the dread out of dying, and give a hope that is steadfast and sure.

And, having said all of that by way of introduction, I want to give you four reasons why I believe in Jesus Christ. I've just simply said that no one else or nothing else can satisfy like Jesus, but now let me tell you why I believe in Jesus Christ. Is Jesus Christ just someone or something that we've conjured up to make ourselves feel better, or do we have a solid foundation—do we have a basis—for our beliefs?

## **I. Historical Reasons**

Reason number one that I believe in Jesus Christ is the historical reason. There was a man named Jesus who lived upon this earth approximately 2,000 years ago. Secular historians will agree. I could quote many, but I'll quote one—a very noted historian, Sir John G. Frazer. Certainly would not be called a Christian, certainly not biased toward Christianity, but I want to read carefully what he said: he said, "My theory assumes the historical reality of Jesus of Nazareth as the great religious and moral teacher who founded Christianity and was crucified at Jerusalem under the governorship of Pontius Pilot. The testimony of the gospels, confirmed by the hostile evidence of Tacitus and the younger Pliny appears amply sufficient to establish these facts to the satisfaction of all unprejudiced inquirers." In plain English, he said, "If you are a historian, you cannot overlook that there was a man—whether you believe he was God or not, whether you believe he was divine or not, whether you accept Him or reject Him—you cannot deny that there was a man who was named Jesus Christ who came and changed the course of history."

Now, out of the life of Jesus Christ we have the Christian Church. We are here tonight. Was it all just a colossal hoax? Well, if it was just a colossal hoax, how do you explain the early followers who died for their faith? Most of the apostles died for their faith. You say, "Well, they knew it was a hoax, but they had to just play it out." Now, my friend, *men may live for a lie, but no man that I know will willingly die for a lie.* These men were so unafraid of death that they gladly flung their lives into the grave because they knew that they had a life that swords could not kill, that fire could not burn, that water could not drown, that the graves could not hold. They knew that they had something, and they sealed it with their lives.

You say, "Yes, they were not liars, but they were deceived; they just thought they



saw Jesus Christ come out of the grave. They just thought that they saw Him; they were hallucinating.” He was seen by more than 500 at one time. Pretty big hallucination, huh? “Well,” you say, “what they saw was a ghost.” They said, “We ate with Him.” They said, “We touched Him. We handled Him.” Historically, Jesus Christ is a person. You must deal with Jesus as a historical person.

You say, “Yes, but what kind of a historical person? There’ve been many religious leaders.”

## II. Scriptural Reasons

Well, there’s another reason that I believe in Jesus Christ: not only do I believe in Jesus Christ because of historical reasons, but I believe in Jesus Christ because of scriptural reasons, because the Bible says He’s the Son of God. “Well,” you say, “what kind of an argument is that? I may not believe.” You may not—that’s your privilege. I’m just telling you why I believe in Jesus Christ. But, let me tell you that I believe that the Bible is the Word of God, and my belief in the Bible is not a blind belief. If I had the time tonight—and it would take hours, and I could do it and not waste any time in hours—I could show you why I know the Bible is the Word of God. I could give you compelling evidence, and I believe that if you would open your heart, you would agree with me that *this book is not the book of the month or the book of the year; it is the book of the ages.*

I could talk to you about fulfilled prophecy, and I could show you that it is astronomically, mathematically impossible for this book to have been written by anything else than divine inspiration.

But, not only could I talk to you about fulfilled prophecy, I could talk to you about the wonderful unity of the Bible, written over 1,500 years, by 40 different authors, in three different languages. And yet, it’s one book—not 66 books, but really one book with 66 different headings that does not contradict itself theologically, philosophically, historically, scientifically, or any other way. The wonderful unity is proof of the Bible.

I could talk to you, my dear friend, about the historical and the scientific accuracy of the Bible and spend many hours belaboring that point to show you why I believe the Bible is the Word of God.

I could talk to you about the longevity of the Bible and tell you how laws have been made against this book; how this book has been laughed at, scorned, ridiculed; how it has been blasphemed and shredded and yet it is still here with us today. For the Bible says, “*The word of the Lord endureth for ever*” (1 Peter 1:25).

But, I’m not here tonight to tell you why I believe in the Bible; I’m here to tell you why I believe in Jesus Christ, and I am telling you, my dear friend, that the central theme of the Bible is Jesus Christ. Now, Acts chapter 10 and verse 43 puts it this way: “*To him*”—that is, “to Jesus”—“*give all the prophets witness*” (Acts 10:43). All of the Bible is written

about the Lord Jesus Christ. In Genesis 3:15, He's the seed of a woman. In Genesis 12, verse 3, He is the seed of Abraham (Genesis 12:3). In Genesis chapter 22, He is shown in Abraham's offering of Isaac (Genesis 22). In Exodus chapter 12, He is the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12). In Leviticus, there are so many figures and pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ: the scapegoat that carried away the sins of the people of Israel pointed to Jesus, who bears away our sin; the beautiful morning turtledove that was offered for sin speaks of Jesus, the man of sorrows; the white pigeon speaks of the spotless and sinless, harmless Son of God; the fine flour that was used in all of these sacrifices speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, that grain of wheat that fell in the earth and came forth again, beaten and smitten for us, bruised and beaten for us; that oil that was poured upon those sacrifices speaks of the Holy Spirit that anointed the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. On and on we could go. In the Book of Numbers, He is the brazen serpent (Numbers 21:9). In Ruth, He's our kinsman redeemer (Ruth 4). In the Book of Psalms, He's the Son of God. In Isaiah, He's the suffering servant. In Daniel, He's the Messiah. In Zechariah, He's the One who has the wounds in His hand. In Malachi, we see Him as the Son of righteousness with healing in His wings (Malachi 4:2).

Now, why do I believe? Listen, look in chapter 5, verse 10: *"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not watch this, the record that God gave of his Son"* (1 John 5:10). Now, if you don't believe the Bible, you are just simply calling God a liar. And, not only are you calling God a liar, but you're calling the hero of the Bible a liar.

Now, you're faced with Jesus. The Bible says He's the Son of God. He claimed to be the Son of God. He allowed people to worship Him. *Suppose Jim Whitmire or Bill or Bob were to come right here in front of everybody else and fall down at my feet and worship me. I tell you what would happen: I'd say, "Get up in a hurry, bud. If you don't, we'll both be in trouble. I'd be in trouble for letting you do it; you'd be in trouble for doing it."* An angel appeared to the Apostle John on the Island of Patmos. John was so awestruck by the glory, and the splendor, and the majesty of that angel that John fell at his feet to worship him, and the angel said, "Don't do it. Get up, for I, too, am a servant. Worship God and Him only" (Revelation 22:8–9). If Jesus Christ is not God, He is not worthy of worship; and yet, Jesus received worship. When Thomas was convinced of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Thomas fell before Him and said, *"My LORD and my God"* (John 20:28). Jesus didn't rebuke him; Jesus blessed him. Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Thomas" (John 20:29).

Now, I want to ask you a question, my dear friend. Here's a man presented in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. He is the central theme of the Bible. He is the hero of the Bible. If He is not the Son of God, number one, the Bible is a bundle of blunders. Number two: Jesus is a fake, a fraud, a liar, and an imposter. You cannot just tip your

hat to Jesus Christ. You cannot just be nice to Jesus Christ. You must accept Him or reject Him. You cannot merely admire Him. Don't try to get away with that. Jesus said, *"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad"* (Matthew 12:30). You cannot be neutral about the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus, as has well been pointed out, is one of three—either He's Lord, liar, or lunatic. You just make up your mind.

We know He existed. We know the Bible says He's the Son of God. We know that He accepted worship, so was He the Lord? If you say, "I don't think He was the Lord," then you've got two options left: number one, He was a liar—He knew He wasn't God, but He pretended to be for whatever reason; or else (worse than that) He was a lunatic, a madman who thought He was God, a megalomaniac who thought He was God, who pretended to be God or thought He was God and really wasn't. Are you going to believe the One who gave the Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount—are you going to believe that gracious One was a maniac, a lunatic? Or worse, are you going to believe that He was a liar, a deceiver, a freak, a fake, a fraud, or an imposter? Or, are you going to believe He's the Lord?

My dear friend, I have, number one, a historical reason for believing in Jesus Christ. I know, I know, I know there was a man called Jesus. Secondly, I have a scriptural reason, because this book that I have proven to be true in so many ways and that I base my life upon clearly presents the Christ that we've been singing about tonight. And, how does the scripture present Jesus? Jesus was the most unique person that ever lived.

#### **A. Jesus Never Modified Anything He Said**

Have you ever thought about this: that Jesus never withdrew or modified anything He ever said? Every time after I preach a sermon, I think, "Oh boy, why did I say that? I wish I could have another chance at that." Very few times, if any, have I ever walked away and said, "Boy, that was it." On Sunday morning, I do have three chances; it looks like I could get it right once. But, have you ever thought about it? Have you ever thought about it? Jesus never once, ever modified anything He said.

#### **B. Jesus Never Apologized for Anything**

And secondly—you just think about this, dear friend: Jesus never apologized for anything. You think about it: He never apologized for anything He said or did. You say, "Well, people didn't get mad at Him." Oh, no—they were mad all the time, but He never apologized. He never said, "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done that; that was a mistake. Forgive Me, please." Now, if any of the rest of us never apologized, we would be terrible, horrible, people. He never apologized about anything.

### **C. Jesus Never Asked Anyone for Advice**

Let me tell you this: Jesus never asked any one for advice. Have you ever thought about that? He never ever asked any one, “What do you think I ought to do?” Not one time did He ask for advice. Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived, and Solomon constantly sought advice. Moses was the great leader, and yet he got 70 elders to advise him. If Jesus Christ is not God, He is a constant egomaniac who never went through anything He said, never apologized for any statement, and never asked advice.

### **D. Jesus Never Asked Anyone to Pray for Him**

And, not one time did He ever ask any one to pray for Him—not one time. “Oh,” you say, “yes, He did: when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, He asked His disciples to pray for Him.” No, He didn’t. He said, “You watch for me,” and He said, “You pray for yourself, that you enter not into temptation” (Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38). He never asked any one to pray for Him. What kind of a man struts around and never asks any one to pray for Him unless He is totally and completely God, self-sufficient?

### **E. Jesus Never Attempted to Justify His Behavior**

He never, ever once attempted to justify His baffling behavior. He did things that constantly baffled people, but He never once explained it or tried to justify it. When Lazarus died, Mary and Martha said, “Come, or he’s dying.” But, Jesus stays away four days. He never explains it. The ship is about sink. Jesus is asleep on the fantail of the ship. You would think at least He’d wake up, and get a can, and start to bail, but He doesn’t do it. I tell you, there was never any one like the Lord Jesus.

### **F. Jesus Never Asked for Forgiveness**

He never asked for forgiveness—not one time. Why? He never needed to be forgiven.

Listen, Jesus didn’t have any strong points. Do you know why? Because He doesn’t have any weak points. You see, in order to have strong points, you’ve got to be weak in some areas. He was strong in every area. His personality was absolutely balanced, perfectly symmetrical. There’s never been any one like the incomparable Jesus. Jesus did something that no one else has ever done: He chose to die. “Oh,” you say, “lots of people choose to die. Suicides choose to die.” They just choose the time of the death; they’re going to die anyway. Jesus was the only person on this earth that chose to die. He said, “*No man taketh [my life] from me...I lay it down of myself*” (John 10:18). Jesus Christ was the only religious leader who came to die. The others came to teach; the others came to lead, but Jesus came to die.

## **III. Spiritual Reasons**

I am telling you this is an unusual person that the Bible presents, this Jesus of

Nazareth, and I'll tell you why I believe in Him. I believe in Him, number one, for historical reasons. I believe in Him, number two, for scriptural reasons. I want to give you a third reason that I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ: I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for spiritual reasons. You see, it's not just simply that I have read the Bible and figured it out. Oh, no—I've had a teacher, and the teacher is the Holy Spirit of God.

Now, look again here in 1 John chapter 5 and verse 6: the Bible says, *"This is he"—speaking of Jesus—"that came by water and blood, 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"—not true, but truth—"the Spirit is truth"—and then it goes on to say—"there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word"—that's Jesus—"and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one...there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one"*—now, listen to verse 9 and see the logic, the inspired logic, of the great Apostle John—*"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. He that believeth on the Son...hath the witness in himself: [and] he that believeth not God hath made him a liar"* (1 John 5:6–10).

#### **A. The Spirit of God Witnesses to Me**

Why do I believe in Jesus Christ? Because the Spirit of the Living God has witnessed to me and testified to me about Jesus Christ. What is the purpose of the Holy Spirit? What is the office work of the Holy Spirit? Jesus said, *"He [will] not speak of himself"* (John 16:13). That is, He's not going to be the originator of what He says. But, Jesus said, *"He'll take the things of mine, and He will show them to you. He will bear witness of me"* (John 16:15). And, the Holy Spirit of God has done this.

Now, look, if you will, in verse 9. You see the word "if" if you have a *King James Version*, as I do tonight. It says "if," but literally it means "since" or "because." *"[Since] we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater"* (1 John 5:9). Now, do you receive the witness of men? Of course you do. I mean, there are people that tell you things and you trust them, isn't that right? Well, I don't care how much sales resistance you have—you receive the witness of men.

For example, if you go out here after this service like I'm planning to do and go to a restaurant, I've got to trust that cook. I've got to receive the witness of that cook that they're not back there poisoning that food. Could be, but I'm really not worried about it. I was on an airplane this week; I got off the airplane. I received the witness of that pilot that he knew how to fly. I mean, I just trusted him—I trusted the pilot. I committed my life to him. My doctor friend, Dave Dunavant—I trusted him so much. I let him put me to sleep and slice me. I think he had a smile on his face. We receive the witness of men. I mean, you live in a life where you trust men.

Now, listen to the argument: *“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater”* (1 John 5:9). You see, God is very kind, and God is very gracious. God does not tell you that you must believe or else and then not help you to believe. You see, the God that commands you to believe is the God that enables you to believe. And, when somebody tells me, “I just can’t believe,” I know they are lying, whether they will admit it or not. Jesus never said to any one, “You cannot come unto Me.” He said, “You will not come unto me,” because He said, “Whosoever will may come.” (Revelation 22:17) And, God enables you to believe the record that He gave.

### **B. The Spirit of God Witnesses in Me**

You see, listen, there was a Christ. God tells about Him in a book. But then, God sends the Holy Spirit to help you to believe. So, first of all, the Holy Spirit of God has witnessed to me about the Lord Jesus Christ. But then, not only has the Holy Spirit of God witnessed to me—once I asked Jesus into my heart, then He began to witness in me. Look, if you will, in verse 10: *“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself”* (1 John 5:10).

Now, you may be saying to me, “Adrian, I don’t believe in your Jesus.” Fine, that’s okay. I can’t make you believe. I wouldn’t if I could. But, I want to tell you something: you can bring me some arguments, but you’re not going to convince me. And, I’ll tell you why: I’ve got something in here. *“He that believeth on the Son...hath the witness in himself”* (1 John 5:10). *Now, suppose there are two men sitting there, and they’re arguing about whether apple pie is any good or not. And, I’m over here eating apple pie; I’ve got a slice in me. Well, they can argue all they want. They’re not going to convince me, because, you see, I have the witness in myself.* That’s the reason the Bible says, *“Taste and see that the LORD is good”* (Psalm 34:8). A Christian with an experience is never at the mercy of an infidel with an argument.

### **C. The Spirit of God Witnesses Through Me**

You see, dear friend, I believe in Jesus Christ because of historical reasons—He existed. I believe in Him for scriptural reasons—the Bible, this wonderful book, keeps telling about this wonderful man. But oh, I believe in Him for spiritual reasons: the Spirit of God witnesses to me, and then the Spirit of God witnesses in me, and then, bless God, He can witness through me. And, you see, when the apostles were preaching, they said, *“We are witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them who obey him”* (Acts 5:32). And, that’s the reason that before I preached tonight, I got down on my knees and I said, “O God, I want You please, dear God, to anoint me.” Why? Because, you see, I’m not trying to persuade you tonight. You understand? *Anything I can talk you into somebody else can talk you out of.* But, you see, if the Holy Spirit of God that convinced me convinces you, then you’ve got it—you



see, you've got it. All I am is the human instrument. That's the reason the apostle said, *"We are witnesses of these things; [but] so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them who obey him"* (Acts 5:32). And, I am depending upon the Holy Spirit of God to make what I say real to you.

Do you know who my audience is tonight? Not you—Him. I just want to please Him. I hope you'll be pleased, but really, if you are not, that's your problem—that's your problem. I can walk out of here tonight and say, "O God, if I preach the truth; if You are happy; Lord, if You agree; if You say, 'Amen,' then Lord, You can convince them." You see, that's the way it's got to go—just like that. You see, He witnesses. The Holy Spirit of God witnesses to me; and then I receive Christ, and then He witnesses in me. And then, He witnesses through me and through you. And that, my dear friend, is the spiritual reason for believing in Jesus Christ. And, what a wonderful reason it is! You say, "Well, that sounds a little mystical." Call it whatever you want. My dear friend, God will enable you to know whether or not Jesus Christ is the Son of God if you want to know.

#### **IV. Personal Reasons**

Now, let me give you the final reason that I believe in Jesus Christ—not only because of historical reasons, not only because of scriptural reasons, and not only because of spiritual reasons, but because of personal reasons. "Now, now, what do you mean by that, Adrian?"

##### **A. What I've Seen in the Lives of Others**

Well, I mean just personally, I've looked around, and the people that I like the best, the people that I admire the most, the people to me that are the most real, the people that I've known these more than 40 years I've walked with Jesus—they are people who love Jesus. Now, we've got some people, as I preached last night, like David, who betrayed our Lord. We have people like hypocrites, like Judas, who've done what they've done. We've had the Jimmy Swaggarts; we've had the Jim Bakers. God knows, we've had it all. But, I want to tell you, my dear friend, those are a handful. You live as I've lived, you walk as I walk—and I've been around Christians for a long time—I want to tell you, the best people on God's green earth are those who love the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean that with all of my heart. That's not just whistling in the graveyard, friend. If you would be honest, you know the sweetest, the kindness, the most loving, the most generous people are people who know the Lord Jesus Christ. You can't fool me, friend—I know that I know that I know—I know—people who are real.

I know this bird's real, right here, right there. Bless his heart. I have worked with this guy since he was a 22-year-old boy. All he knows about music I taught him, since he



was 22 years of age, and he's real—he's real. The deacons in this church... I drove out here with my dad. As we drove past Gene Howard's furniture store, Dad said, "He's a nice man, isn't he?" I said, "He's a great man—great man. He is real." There are people out there that I know—I'm looking into the faces of people who know Jesus Christ. The best people I know, dear friend—the people who are real. You can't tell me they're frauds; you can't tell me they're impostors. I won't believe it.

### **B. What I've Experienced in My Own Heart**

But, my dear friend, not only what I've seen in the lives of others, but what I've experienced in my own heart. I want to stand before you tonight and tell you joyfully that Jesus Christ is changing my life. I didn't say He *has changed*, but He *is changing* my life. From glory to glory He's changing me. And, I'm going to tell you something: there is no way that you'll explain the man speaking tonight apart from Jesus Christ. You don't have to believe it, but I know it. I know that I know that there's no way that you can explain my life apart from my dear Savior, whom I would die for gladly if He required it.

Byron Richardson, a dear friend of mine, was driving through the mountains with his wife, through the Smokies—a very beautiful drive; you've been there on the Blue Ridge Parkway. He was driving with his wife, and the gas got over on the left-hand side of the gauge a little bit. And, you know how wives are—she said, "Sweetheart, it's time we got gas." He said, "We don't need gas yet; I'll get gas." And, he kept on driving, and he got in those mountains. And, the sun went down; and as the sun went down, the gas gauge went down, too. And, he said, "Well, surely—surely—I'll come to a service station." And, he kept on driving, and it kept getting darker on that mountain road—and no service station. He wasn't nearly as afraid of what might happen out there in the dark as he was of what his wife might do to him. They're driving along, and he didn't even have enough courage to tell her. He was hoping she wouldn't look over and see him praying, "O God, let there be—please, God, let there be—a gas station somewhere." And, he drove and drove until it seemed like the tank was about to suck itself inside out, it got so empty. And, he's saying, "I must find a place."

And, as he came around a bend, there was one of those little mountain grocery stores. It still had the old gasoline pump out there—you know, with the glass cylinder. You've seen those kind? People collect them as antiques. And, the old mountaineer came out, and he drove in. And, he said, "Do you have any gas? I need some." And, he got out, and he was feeling so good now because he had gotten this gas. And, the mountain air was just so cool and crisp, and it just it was just a wonderful experience for him, this little old quaint grocery store. And, he looked at the man whose had his head down pumping the gas. He said, "It's great to be alive, isn't it?" And, this old man never lifted his head; he said, "I don't know. I've never been no other way." Folks, when I

heard that, I thought, “I have—I’ve been another way.” There was a time when I didn’t have life, and then there’s a time when I met Jesus. I had existence before I met the Lord Jesus, but He said, “[I’ve] come that [you] might have life, and...have it...abundantly” (John 10:10). “He that believeth on the Son hath...life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see [the] life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). Do you love Jesus? Do you? Do you?

Do you know who Ben Johnson is? You know the name Ben Johnson? How many of you know that name—Ben Johnson? World famous name, because you know what he did? He ran in the Olympics faster than any man on earth. Outran Carl Lewis—went past the goal and Canada cheered our hero! They put a gold medal around his neck and then took it away because they said he was using illegal drugs. Do you know what this book says? Revelation 3, verse 11: “[See to it] that no man take [your] crown”— “[see to it] that no man take [your] crown” (Revelation 3:11). Sooner or later, we’re going to appear before the Lord Jesus Christ. I love Him, and I want a crown to lay at His feet, and I hope you do, too.

## Conclusion

I want every head bowed, every eye closed. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I want you to remember what the Apostle Paul said: “So run, that [you] may obtain” (1 Corinthians 9:24). Be true to Jesus. Would you tell Him tonight, “Lord Jesus, I believe You’re the Son of God. I believe it. I believe it because the Bible tells me so. I believe it because the Spirit tells me so. I believe it because the best people I know tell me so. I believe that You’re the Son of God. And, Lord Jesus, tonight, in the Canaan Camp Meeting, I want to give my heart and my life for just praising Him, worshipping Him,” giving Him your heart and your life anew and afresh?

Now, while Christians are doing that, heads are bowed and eyes are closed. How many would say to me, “Pastor, if I would be very, very honest with you and put my foolish pride in the dust—if I would be honest with you—I would have to tell you tonight that I’m not absolutely certain if I died right now, I’d go to Heaven. I don’t know that I know that my sin is forgiven. I’m not 100% certain that I’m saved, but I need to be. I ought to be. I am concerned about my soul”? While heads are bowed and eyes are closed—no one looking around; this is between you, me, and the Lord—if you would lift your hand in just a moment when I ask you to, I’m going to pray for you. I’ll not embarrass you; I’ll not point you out in any way whatsoever, but I do want to pray for you if you would say, “I’m not certain that I’m saved, but I am concerned for my soul and I do want to be remembered in prayer.” While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would you just slip up your hand and take it down?

Yes, hold it up. Are there others? Yes, yes, yes. Slip it up; take it down. Yes, God

bless you. Take it down. Any one else? “I’m not certain that I’m saved. I’d like to be. I have existence, but I don’t know that I have life. I want this life that you’ve been talking about.” Any one else? “Pray for me—pray for me.” Yes, I see that hand; take it down. God bless you. Someone else? Just slip it up, and take it down. And, I want to pray for you sincerely. Yes, okay.

Father God, I pray in the name of Jesus for these tonight who need Him. Lord God, help them tonight to get this matter settled and to say tonight an everlasting, “Yes” to Jesus Christ. Spirit of the Living God, give them courage and obedience to the faith. In Your name I pray. Amen.

# A Know-So Salvation

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 29, 1991

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 John 5:5–13

*“Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”*

1 JOHN 5:5

## Outline

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## Introduction

Take God's Word and turn with me please to 1 John 5:5. Now, what I want to speak to you about today is certainty and surety. That is, how we can know that we know that we are saved.

Now, I was in a hospital a while back and I was witnessing to a lady. She had not yet given her heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctor said she did not have long to live. So I asked her if she knew the Lord Jesus, and she said, "no" she didn't. I asked her "would you like to know Christ?" She said, "I surely would." I took God's Word and showed her how she could trust Christ. Then I led her in a prayer where she invited Jesus Christ into her heart to forgive her sin and to save her once and for all, now and forever.

There were some of her loved ones standing there in the hospital room, and I thought they would rejoice. I turned to one young man who was her son-in-law. I said to him, "Isn't it wonderful that she has been saved?" "Oh," he said, "No one can know that they are saved." I said, "Oh, but if a person will trust Christ, they can know that they are saved." He said, "No, no one can know that they are saved."

Now, he was not an unbeliever, that is he did not repudiate Christianity, he just had some doctrinal stance that would not allow him to accept the fact that a person, a child of God, can say, "Praise God, I know that I am saved."

I said to him, "Young man, let me give you a verse of Scripture." And it is the same verse of Scripture I want to give to you this morning, it is 1 John 5:13. It says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that ye may hope that ye have eternal life." No, well, let me try it again. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that ye may think that you have eternal life." "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that ye may surmise that you have eternal life." Wish, conjure, what is the word that I am missing? Know, that you may K-N-O-W, know that you have eternal life.

Now my dear friend, God said, "I wrote an entire book of the Bible that you might know that you have eternal life." Why? Because of the vast importance. Friend, if you do not know that you are saved. I mean, if you do not know your future; if you do not know your eternity, well, you better find out. We are not talking about the color of the carpet. We are not talking about denominational preference. We are not talking about whether we like the choir music or not, we are talking my dear friend, about eternity. "These things have I written unto you who believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life."

Let's back up to verse five, and just get a running start on that verse: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he that cometh by water and blood, 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. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified to the Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: and he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

The word know means absolute assurance. Yes, indeed as I showed the young man in the hospital room, and I want to show you, you can say, "I know that I'm saved." According to verse thirteen, it is possible to be saved and know it, but according to verse thirteen it is also possible to be saved and doubt it. If it is not possible to be saved

and doubt it, why did he write, that we might know it? Do you see it? He is writing to some people who might have some doubt that they might have assurance.

Can a person be saved and have doubts? Yes. Is doubt good? No. Doubt is to your spirit what pain is to your body. Pain is at least a warning, a signal that something is wrong. It does not mean you are dead. It just means that something is wrong. And doubt is to the spirit what pain is to the body.

If you have doubts and you are truly a born again child of God, there is some spiritual sickness you have. All Christians from time to time, I'm sure, have some doubts. A woman told Dwight L. Moody she had been saved for twenty-five years and never had a doubt. He said, "I doubt you're saved." It is interesting isn't it? We say, "What did he mean by that?" Well, it would be like you saying to me, we have been married twenty-five years and never had an argument. I'd say, "I doubt you are married." After I said that one time, one man said, "Well, you know really my wife and I have been married twenty-five years and we never have had an argument." He looked like a wimp to me.

I'm not saying that arguing with your wife is good, not at all. And I am not saying that doubting your Lord is good, not at all. As a matter of fact, what I want to do is to help you to remove all doubt and to have that certainty of salvation, that assurance.

These things have I written unto you who believe on the name of the Son of God that you may K-N-O-W, know that you have been saved." As a matter of fact, if you will take First John and get a pen somewhere and just read all the way through First John, all five chapters, and just circle the word, K-N-O-W, you will be amazed how many times the Apostle John uses that word, K-N-O-W, in this Epistle from this Apostle on assurance.

Let me tell you dear friend, how I know how Adrian Rogers knows that he is saved. Not because of any confidence that I have in myself, but I want to tell you that I do know that I am saved, and I bless God that I know that I am saved. I know I am saved dear friend, number one because of the root of my belief. And number two, because of the fruit of my behavior—the root of my belief and the fruit of my behavior. And I want to show you exactly why I say that.

## **I. The Root of My Belief**

First, let's think about the root of our belief. What is it that we believe? Are Christians just gullible? Are we believing in fairy tales? Or is there a basis for our belief? Why do we believe what we believe? The Apostle John gives us three wonderful, wonderful bases for our belief.

### **A. The Work of Christ**

Number one is the work of Christ. Verse six says, "This is he that came by water and

blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only but by water and blood."

Now, what does that refer to? Well, the Bible tells us when the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, they put a spear in His side, in John chapter nineteen and beginning in verse thirty-three, and out came water and blood—John 19:33 and 34. This tells us that Jesus died the excruciating, painful death, and out of His wounded side there flowed water and blood. We are saved by blood and sanctified by water.

In the tabernacle, which is an Old Testament picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, when you came into the tabernacle, first there was the brazen altar upon which the bloody sacrifice was made and then afterward, there was a laver or great basin that the priest would wash in. So there is first the blood, and then the water. That was all a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says He came by blood and by water. And what that simply means is that we have the saving blood, the sanctifying water. His blood forgives us, the sanctifying water keeps us clean.

You say, I don't think I have ever heard that before? Well you have sung it many times, in "Rock of Ages." Do you remember this part of "Rock of Ages"? "Let the water and the blood from thy wounded side which flowed be of sin the double cure, save from wrath and make me pure. From Thy wounded side which flowed save from wrath," that's the blood, "and make me pure," that's the water.

Now, friend I want to tell you the way I know I am saved is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died to purchase my salvation. That is an historical fact. That is the saving work of Christ.

### **B. The Witness of the Spirit**

Another way that I know that I am saved is the witness of the Spirit. Let's continue in First John, the last part of verse six; "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. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit and the water and the blood: And these three agree in one." Now, the Spirit takes the water and the blood dear friend, and applies that to my heart. Now, notice the argument in verse nine. 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."

Now, the fact that Jesus Christ died on the cross, He came by water and blood, that is an established fact. But how is that made real to me? How do I know that is true? How do I know there was a man named Jesus Christ? How do I know He was the sinless Son of God? How do I know that God sent Him? How do I know that He really, literally, actually died on that cross and took my sin? Well, my dear friend, I don't just have to depend upon somebody's argument, the Holy Spirit of God is here to make that real in my heart. You see, God gave us the work of Christ. But then to make the work of Christ, the water and the blood real to us, He gave us the Spirit.



Now, notice the argument in verse nine, "If we receive the witness of men." Now, the word "if" may be translated since. Since we believe the witness of men. All of us believe the witness of men. Do you know where I woke up this morning? In Augusta, Georgia. I was over there last night in a missions conference. I preached over there. I got up this morning and went to the airport and flew to Atlanta, and then flew on over here. In order for me to get here, I had to exercise faith in an airplane pilot. I mean I accepted that man by faith. I never met him. I have not seen his credentials, I never saw him fly before, but you know the whole Delta organization put their stamp of approval on this man, so I just got on the plane and I never thought too much about it. We accept the witness of men.

I got a bite of breakfast this morning in a restaurant. How do I know that food was not poisoned? I had faith in that lady who served it. Friend, listen. We receive the witness of men. Your doctor writes a prescription, you look at it. You can't tell whether what it is. It is amazing! He carries that thing down there to the pharmacist. And the pharmacist reads it, and you go home and take a medicine whose name you can't pronounce, who was filled from a prescription by a man you have never met. And you take it into you. Why? We receive the witness of men.

Now, what the argument is this? That Christ died for us, there is the work of Christ. And then my dear friend, there is the witness of the Spirit. Do not tell me that you can't believe. I do not believe that you can't believe. Do you know why I don't believe that you can't believe? Because, if you want to believe, the Holy Spirit will help you. That's right. No man can say, "I can't believe." God eliminates that excuse, because to people who always receive the witness of men, God has given the witness of the Holy Spirit.

My dear friend, when I am preaching, I can preach truth, but only the Holy Spirit can impart truth. The Apostle Paul said, we are witnesses of these things and so is also the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey Him." Now, first of all He witnesses to us, then He witnesses in us. Let me just show you in verse ten, "He that believeth on the Son hath the witness of Himself." Dear friend, before I got saved, He witnessed to me. And He told me, this is true what Jesus Christ did. And now, He witnesses in me. I have the witness in myself.

Now, suppose I am eating a piece of apple pie, and I am enjoying it. And you come to me and say, "There is no such thing as apple pie. I don't believe in apple pie. And if there is apple pie, it is no good." Well, my dear friend, I want to tell you, in spite all of your arguments, I've got the witness within me. I have the witness on the inside. A Christian with a testimony is never at the mercy of an unbeliever with an argument because he has the witness in himself.

### **C. The Word of the Father**

There is also the Word of the Father, the Word of the Father. Continue to read as we

look in the last part of verse ten. "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life..."

Oh, my friend, here is the basis of our belief. Here is the reason for our certainty. We are not just gullible fools. Jesus Christ died. He came by water and blood. The Holy Spirit of God says yes, that is true. It is all attested to by the Word of God.

Now, my dear friend, to doubt the Bible is to call God a liar, according to verse ten, "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar." You say, "Well, I'm trying to believe." Well don't pride yourself in that. Suppose I told you something. You said, "Well, Adrian I'm trying to believe." I say, "It's true." "Well, I'm trying to believe you." What you mean is that you are not certain whether I'm telling the truth or not. My dear friend, if you don't believe me, if you can't believe what I say, you have just cut the taproot of my character. He that believeth not God, just can't say, "Well this is just a little peccadillo of mine. I just don't have to believe that." You have made God a liar. Either this is His Word or it is not His Word. My dear friend, I want to tell you, that is the root of my belief. The work of Christ, the witness of the Spirit, and the Word of the Father, that's the root of it.

Thank God we are not just gullible people. There is a reason for believing. You say, "Why do you believe the Bible is the Word of God?" I wish I had about a week to tell you why. But my dear friend, this is the inerrant, infallible Word of God. And you don't have to surmise on that. It is just a test of the ages. It is so good to have a record. It is so good to have the written Word rather than your emotions.

Suppose I am in a courtroom and the judge says to me, "Mr. Rogers, are you married?" I say, "Yes I am." "Well can you prove you are married, Mr. Rogers?" "Yes I can." "Well prove it." "Well, I was there in the church and I saw Joyce coming down the aisle. My heart got all twitterpated, and oh, I was so happy. Oh, judge, it's the most wonderful feeling in the world to be married." He will say, "I'm sorry, I'm happy that you feel that way, but that's not evidence in this court, how you feel. And I'm glad you feel that way, son. But I want to know, are you married? Do you have some proof?" Then I go down to the courthouse. And I get that document, notarized and sealed and signed, a record, and I bring it. He says, "Okay, that's better." Friend, I am glad I have got something better than my emotions. This is the record. I have got the Word of God. "These things have we written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that you may K-N-O-W, know that you have eternal life."

## **II. The Fruit of My Behavior**

Number two now, the fruit of my behavior. You see, I can look at it from another way. What has it done in me? I mean is this all just some exercise in intellectual philosophy? Or has there been a change?

Now, John is very, very practical when he gives us these theological truths, the basis of our belief. He shows us how it ought to show up in our behavior. And he gives three primary tests of behavior, the fruit.

### **A. The Commandment Test**

Let's examine our own heart and life, and see if we have them. First of all is what I want to call the commandment test. "And hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments"—1 John 2:3. That is the commandment test.

"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a L-I-A-R "liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked"—1 John 2:4-6.

Now, John starts this by saying "He that saith," I wonder if John had been in a testimony meeting where somebody was bragging about being saved, saying he was, but his walk and his talk did not get together. "He that saith." What he says is, if you say that you are saved then it is going to show up in your life. You are going to be keeping the commandments of God. Now, you do not keep the commandments of God in order to be saved. You keep the commandments of God because you are saved.

This brings a real problem because not a one of us has always kept all of the commandments. That's true. I have not since I have been saved. And you have not since you have been saved. Yet the Bible says that this is the way we know that we are in Him that we keep the commandments.

Well, that is kind of frightening, isn't it? Which one of us could say that we have lived a perfect life since we received the Lord Jesus? And yet John ends this book by saying, "These things have I written unto you that you may know that you have eternal life."

Well, it's all wrapped up in that word "keep." And the word actually is a mariners' word. It is a sailor's word. You know, in this day when sailors did not sail by radio and by all of the modern instruments of navigation, they sailed by the stars. They would set their course by the stars. A sailor sailing by the stars would be "keeping the stars". He would keep his course by the stars. That is what he set his course by, and that was his intention to sail by the stars. He is keeping the stars.

Now, God says we are to keep His commandments. That is the desire, the goal, the guide, for our lives—is the Word of God, the commandments of Jesus Christ. Don't tell me that you have been saved, that you have been born again if it is not your desire to

live by the Word of God. You may get blown off course. You may get distracted. There may be a time when you will get confused. But the aim, the goal, of your life is to keep the commandments of God.

I will tell you, dear friend, ever since I gave my heart to Jesus, there has been a change, a divine change, a deep change, a radical change, and there is in me a burning desire to live for God. Is there in you? If there is not, you need to get saved. You need to get saved.

You say, "Don't you sin anymore?" Yes, I do. I will tell you there is a difference, before I got saved I was running to sin, and now I am running from it. I am running from it. Oh, I may fail. But the desire of my heart is to live by the Word of God and if that is not the desire of your heart, what ever you call salvation you had better go back and check up again.

That is the commandment test. If you can willfully and knowingly sin against the will of God with no conviction, no compunction, no remorse, you need to get saved.

A lot of people say, "Well I walked down an aisle somewhere and I got saved. I know I'm just an old backslider now, but I'm still saved and going to heaven." No, you are not. You live that way, high, wide and handsome, and it does not break your heart, and there is no conviction, no remorse, you don't know the God of the Bible. "Hereby know we that we know him... we keep His commandments."

## **B. The Companion Test**

Number two, there is the companion test. Let's read 1 John 3:14, "We know that we pass from death unto life, because we love the brethren." First of all, he says we know because we keep the commandments. Now he says we know because we love the brethren. This is the second proof. I talked to you about the root of our belief, now I'm talking to you about the fruit of our behavior because we love the brethren.

When I am saved, number one, I want to be right with my Father, and number two, I want to be with my brother. Oh, you say, "Well, I'm saved, but I don't want to go down there to the church. I am saved, but I have no use for the church." My dear friend, if you love Jesus, you are going to love what Jesus loves, and Jesus loves the church. You need to be in a local New Testament, Bible-believing church and be a part of that wonderful church.

Did you know that the word saint is never used in the Bible? It is saints. It is plural. It is always "in the saints." When you persecute the church, you persecute Jesus. When the Apostle Paul was on the road to Damascus, persecuting those Christians, Jesus said, "Saul why are you persecuting me?" Now, friend, going to church will not make you a Christian, no more going into the garage will make you an automobile. But when you realize that you have been bought by the blood of Christ, when the Spirit of God comes in you, you receive a new nature, and you are going to keep His

commandments, and you are going to love the brethren.

### C. **The Commitment Test**

A third test is the commitment test. This is the greatest and the strongest of all, and all of the others grow out of it. The Bible says, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself"—1 John 5:10. And verse thirteen continues with "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God..."

You say, "Pastor, that says believe. Why do you call it the commitment?" Because in the Bible, the word believe and the word commit are the same word. The Bible says concerning Jesus, "Many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them..."—John 2:23-24. And the word believe and the word commit are the same word right there. Jesus did not commit himself to them. They said they believed in Him, but He did not believe in them. He knew that they were just miracle-mongers. He knew that they were not true believers. But this thing of Bible faith is not just an intellectual exercise. You do not believe about Jesus, you believe in Jesus. You commit yourself to Jesus.

Go back to that airplane that I came over here on. And I committed myself to that airplane. I did not just say, "Well, those things can fly. I'm going to Memphis. I believe it can fly. I believe that is a good pilot. I have confidence in the airline." No, my dear friend, I committed myself to that plane. He that commits himself to the Son of God, is the one who is saved? Have you done this? Notice it doesn't say, he who has believed; it says He who believes. It is always present tense.

Have you ever heard anybody ask someone, "Are you saved?" They say, "Yes, I'm saved." They say, "Well, tell me about it." "Well I remember back when I was a nine year old child, I remember walking down the aisle, and giving my hand to my Pastor and my heart to Jesus Christ. Now, I may not be living for God right now, I'll admit, but I know that I am saved because I remember what I did when I was a nine-year-old boy. I remember believing on Jesus Christ."

Friend, it may surprise you to know that the Bible never uses an experience as proof of your salvation. It never ever points back to some time when you believed on Jesus Christ. Never, never. You know I even hear people say, "Boy, if you cannot show me the time, the spot, the place, the moment when you received Jesus Christ, you are not saved." Do you ever hear that? Sure you have. Sounds pretty good, there is just one thing wrong with it, you cannot find that in the Bible. You can't find that in the Bible. The Bible never says that you know when you are saved or whether you are not saved by something you remember in the past. It says "he that believes."

You want to know whether you are saved or not? Is the man sitting in that seat right now, believing in Jesus Christ? Are you? Are you committed to Him? Are you trusting Him—Him only, Him always? Are you believing? If you *are*, you *did*.

I mean are you married? Well then, he did get married, because he is married. I mean, dear friend, there was a time. Yes, I am not saying that there is not a time when you received Christ. I am not saying there is not a moment. I am not saying there is not a day. There was a day. Absolutely. But that is not the test. The test is, do you now believe in Jesus Christ now? Are you, with all of your heart and soul, trusting in Him?

## **Conclusion**

Now the root of my belief is the work of Christ; the witness of the Spirit and the Word of God. Thank God that is the root of my belief.

What is the fruit of my behavior? There is the commandment test. I want to live by the Word of God. There is the companion test. I love the things of God. And there is the commitment test, right now, this moment, with all of my heart, as best I know how, I trust you, Lord Jesus to save me. That does not mean I have to keep on getting saved. I was saved the moment I trusted Jesus, back there as a fifteen-year-old boy. But my dear friend, the proof that I am saved is that I am trusting Him right now as my personal Lord and Savior.

Is it not great to be able to say, "Thank God, I know I am saved. Hallelujah!"

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Father God I pray today in the name of Jesus that you will take this your wonderful Word and seal it to our hearts. Thank you Lord that we have the record. Thank you Lord that we have a written Word, not just somebody's memory, not some tradition, and Lord we have your Word. Thank you Lord that we have a basis for our belief. Thank you Lord that that belief has shown itself in a changed life. We love you for this. Father I pray that many today might say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ. In His name I pray. Amen.

# How to Be Absolutely Sure

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: December 27, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 5:5–13**

## Outline

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## Introduction

**Y**ou know, God does not owe us explanations. They wouldn't do us any good anyway, because if He explained, we still wouldn't understand. So, don't ask Him to explain. That would be like asking Einstein to explain something to your dog. You're not going to understand the ways of God. His ways are above our ways. We trust and obey. We do not live by explanations; we live by promises. Amen? And, one of the great promises, however, is that we can know that we know that we know that we're saved—Heaven-born and Heaven-bound. And, if you are not saved, you need to be saved so you can know it. And, if you are saved, you ought to know it. Somebody said, "If you could be saved and not know it, you could lose it and not miss it." The truth of the matter is that you can know beyond a shadow of any doubt that you are saved.

Now, we sang a song "Saved by His Power Divine." There are only two classes in the world. Now, we divide people by upper class, middle class, lower class; but God doesn't do that. There are only two classes—the saved and the lost, the saints and the aint's. And, you are in one category or you are in another. You say, "Well, I'm not entirely saved, Pastor Rogers." No, no—nobody is half saved. To be half saved is to be altogether entirely lost. Either you are saved or you are lost. "Well," you say, "only God



can say who's saved." Well, you're right about that, and that's what we're going to talk about today. And, we're going to find out what God says; and then, when we find out what God says, then you can know what God says and you can be sure.

Now, let's see what God says. First John chapter 5, verse 5: *"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he that came by water and blood, 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. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. 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. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life"*—now, here's the climatic verse—verse 13—*"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know"*—K-N-O-W—*"that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God"* (1 John 5:5–13).

Now, are Christians fools? Are we mere sentimental sentimentalists, or do we have a basis for our belief? Now, the Gospel of John (John's previous book)—the gospel was written to tell us how to be saved. And, this 1 John was written (the epistle of John) to tell us how to know that we're saved. If you take your Gospel of John when you get home sometime and read it, circle the word *know*—K-N-O-W. Just circle it. Maybe take a red pen and just circle it. By the way, don't mind writing in your Bible. When you wear it out, get a new one. Amen? Just circle it. And, if you have a Bible falling apart, you'll have a life that's not falling apart. Just circle it. Every time you find the word K-N-O-W—know—just circle it. And, you will find that over 40 times in these five chapters he uses the word *know*. It is the gospel of certainty. It is not a "hope so, maybe so"; it is a "know-so salvation." And, he says, *"These things"*—verse 13—*"have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that [you] may know that [you] have eternal life"* (1 John 5:13). Wouldn't it be wonderful for you to say, "Praise God, I know that I know that I know that no matter what happens I am Heaven-born and I am Heaven-bound"? Now, there's another keyword, and it is used some ten times in these verses that I've just read to you—1 John chapter 5, verses 5 through 13 (1 John 5:5–13). And, that keyword is the same word. It is translated different ways. It is translated "witness," "record," "testimony," and "testify." It's the same word; it's just translated different ways.

So, God is giving us a witness so we can know. He is giving us a testimony so that

we can know. And, that's what we're going to be talking about today—the source of certainty, the basis of our belief. And, remember last week we told you that a threefold cord is not easily broken. We told you three ways that you could test false spirits. Now, we're going to tell you today three ways that you can know—you can know, K-N-O-W—that you are saved, and that you're on the way to Heaven, and that you can be absolutely sure.

## **I. The Atoning Work of Christ**

Now, the first way—there is the certainty that comes from the atoning work of Christ. Write down “the atoning work of Christ”—“the atoning work of Christ.” Now, how does that certainty come? Well, look, if you will, in verse 5: *“Who is he that overcometh the world...?”* (1 John 5:5). Excuse me, verse 6: *“This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood”* (1 John 5:6).

### **A. The Meaning of Water and Blood**

Now, what does that mean? Well, it speaks of what Jesus Christ did to redeem us, and it said that He *“came by water and blood”* (1 John 5:6). What is the meaning of that? What is the meaning of water and blood? Put in your margin “John”—that is, this time, the Gospel of John—“chapter 19, verses 33 and 34.” The setting for this verse is that Jesus Christ is on the cross. He is dying in agony and blood upon that cross, and the Roman soldiers, in order to make certain that those who had been crucified were dead (the Jews wanted them dead before the Sabbath), they were coming along to break the legs of those who had been crucified to hasten death. But, when they came to Jesus, He was already dead. Now, listen to the scripture—John 19, verses 33 and 34: *“But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water”* (John 19:33–34). Out of the wounded side of the Lord Jesus there poured out blood and water.

And now, the Apostle John tells us over here in the epistle that we're reading—in 1 John chapter 5 and verse 6: *“This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ”* (1 John 5:6). The pericardial plural fluid that encases the heart is a watery substance, and, of course, it's the heart that pumps the blood. But sometimes, in great duress, medical people tell us that that plasma—it separates. And, that fluid is there around the heart—that plural fluid that shows something of the agony that Jesus had. You see, why did the thieves die and Jesus not die? Why? They broke their legs. They didn't need to break Jesus's legs. And, Jesus died before they died. I don't know whether I said that right or not. Jesus died first. Why did Jesus die first and the thieves

not die—the other two? Because Jesus died of a broken heart—Jesus literally died of a broken heart. There was no agony like the agony of Jesus.

You cannot understand the pressure that was upon the Lord Jesus Christ. We saw a premonition of that—or, we saw the beginning of that—when Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, His perspiration became as blood—water and blood, water and blood. Jesus died in agony. The eternities were compressed upon the Lord Jesus. The sins of the world were distilled upon the Lord Jesus. He died of a broken heart. And, when that soldier took that spear and rammed it into the side of the Lord Jesus, there poured out water and blood. That's the meaning of John speaking of water and blood.

### **B. The Message of Water and Blood**

But, what is the message of it? Well, you see, it is the blood that cleanses from sin. It is the blood that removes the penalty of sin. *“The wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). *“Without shedding of blood [there] is no remission”* (Hebrews 9:22). And, Jesus took my sin and your sin to that cross, and with His blood He paid sin's penalty. But, there's also the water. The water speaks of that which continues to cleanse. It speaks not only of salvation, but sanctification.

Remember in the Gospel of John, chapter 1, the Bible says, *“And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us”* (John 1:14). The Word is Jesus. The logos was made flesh and dwelt among us. The word *dwelt* is the word *tabernacled*: Jesus tabernacled among us. Did you know that in the Old Testament God had a tabernacle? And, that tabernacle in the Old Testament was a prophecy of Jesus. And, had you gone in to that tabernacle to worship, first of all, there would have been a brazen altar—and that's where the blood would have been shed. That spoke of the blood of Jesus. And then, right past that altar you would come to a great basin called a *laver*. And, the blood is here at the altar, but at the laver is water. And so, they would come, first of all, through the blood to the water. The blood deals with the penalty of sin; the water deals with the pollution of sin. Jesus tabernacled among us. Jesus came by blood and water. And, it's significant that when they put that spear in His side, out came blood and water.

Now, what does that have to do with the assurance of my salvation? Friend, my hope is built on nothing less than the blood and the water. And, you know, we sing that song “Rock of Ages.” Have you ever thought about that phrase that you've sung so many times?

Let the water and the blood,  
From thy wounded side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure;  
Save from wrath and make me pure. (Augustus M. Toplady)

That's the water and the blood. He saves from wrath. He makes us pure. I wouldn't give half a hallelujah of your hope of Heaven apart from the water and the blood—apart from the death of the Lord Jesus Christ upon that cross. That's the solid rock on which we stand. Friend, that, first of all, that's the first chord in our threefold cord that gives us assurance. There is certainty from the atoning work of Christ. Did you write that down?

## II. The Abiding Witness of the Spirit

All right. Now, write this down: there is certainty from the abiding witness of the Spirit—the atoning work of the Son—and the abiding witness of the Spirit. Now, continue to read the last part of verse 6: *“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. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood”*—now, you see, the Spirit takes the water and the blood...the Holy Spirit to bear witness—*“and these three agree in one”*—now, notice John's argument here—*“If”*—and that word *if* can be translated “since”—*“[Since] 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. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself”* (1 John 5:6–10). Now, that is the abiding witness. You see, you have the atoning work, but the Holy Spirit takes the atoning work and He testifies of it. He gives witness to you on the inside.

### A. The Holy Spirit Witnesses to You

Now, let me tell you how the Holy Spirit of God witnesses. This is the way that you can know that you have this blessed assurance. First of all, the Holy Spirit witnesses to you—the Holy Spirit witnesses to us. That is, before we're even saved, the Holy Spirit is telling us about Jesus. Notice again, if you will, verse 6: *“[And] this is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood”*—you say, “Well Adrian, how do I know that's true—just cause you say it?” Ha ha, no. Listen—*“And it is the Spirit that [bears] witness”*—do you think I'm up here trying to persuade you of something? Oh, no no. You see, it is the Holy Spirit of God that will tell you whether this is true or whether it's not—*“it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is true”* (1 John 5:6).

What is the ministry of the Holy Spirit? Jesus said, “He will take the things of Mine, and He will show them to you” (John 16:14). And, notice what He says there in verse 9: *“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater”* (1 John 5:9). You believe men? You receive the witness of men all the time. **You go out to a restaurant. You trust people to eat. It takes more faith every day. You're sitting in this building.**

You're trusting the engineers that figured this roof that it'll not fall in. I've often thought about it. You get on an airplane to fly overseas. You sit down. You've never seen that pilot; you've never met him. You've never examined that airplane. And, he cracks that throttle open, and he's going to fly you all across that puddle. That's faith. You go to the doctor. He writes a prescription that neither he or the pharmacist can read. And, that man goes back there, and takes all that stuff from the shelf, and mixes something up, and you take it. Listen, we receive the witness of men every day, don't we? Surely, we do.

You say, "Well, it's difficult to live by faith." You live by faith every day of your life, and you put your faith in two-legged men whose breath is in their nostrils. *"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater"* (1 John 5:9). Men can lie. The Holy Spirit is truth. And so, first of all, the Holy Spirit witnesses to us. That's the reason why I'm never moved when a man says, "Well, I can't believe." He's a liar. If you want to believe, the Holy Spirit will enable you to believe. Jesus did not say, "You cannot come unto me." Jesus said, "Ye will not come unto me." You see, it is because the Holy Spirit of God, when the Word of God is preached, the Holy Spirit of God witnesses with the Word. First of all, he witnesses to you.

### **B. The Holy Spirit Witnesses in You**

And then, not only does He witness to you, then, He witnesses in you. Look in the last part of verse 10, if you will: *"He that believe"*—the first part—*"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself"* (1 John 5:10). Now, when He witnesses to you and you receive Christ, then He comes into you and you have the witness in you. Now, suppose Brother Bob and Brother Jim are arguing with me about apple pie. And, I have an apple pie over here, and I've just eaten a big slice of it. And, Jim says, "I don't believe there is any apple pie. It doesn't even exist." And, Bob says, "Well, I believe it exists, but it's no good." And, Adrian is over here, having wrapped himself around a piece of apple pie. Now, you think those two guys are going to disturb me? You see, I have the witness in myself—I have the witness in myself. And, that is the reason that a Christian with an experience is never at the mercy of an infidel with an argument. Pardon me. You see, He witnesses to you.

And then, He witnesses in you. That's the reason the Bible says, *"Taste and see that the LORD is good"* (Psalm 34:8). One way to find out whether apple pie is good or not is to taste and see. Now, you say, "Well, that brings up a real question, Adrian: What is the witness of the Holy Spirit?" Now, I want you to be very careful here. The witness of the Holy Spirit is not an emotional feeling. Now, if you don't get this, you're going to miss the whole thing. Most people think that the witness of the Holy Spirit is some emotional

feeling—goose bumps, liver shivers. You say, “I know I’m saved ’cause I feel it.” Oh, boy. Then, your assurance of your salvation is going to go up and down with the condition of your liver. If you live by emotions, you’re going to be on a roller coaster. No, no, no—the witness of the Spirit is far deeper than emotions.

How does God know anything? Does He know something because somebody tells Him? Does He know something because He has learned it? Does He know something because He feels it? No. Spiritual knowledge goes beyond those things. Now, very frankly, I’m not really an emotional person, except when I preach. I get emotional when I preach, but I’m more emotional when I preach than at other times. Sometimes Joyce will say to me, “Hey, why don’t you get excited like you do when you preach?” I don’t get all that high; I don’t get all that low. Well, I can’t take credit for that, one way or the other. That’s just the way I’m wired. That is my psychology. I’d be that way if I were not saved. That’s my emotional band. I don’t get all that high; I don’t get all that low. I’m more in a narrow band.

Now, the assurance of your salvation can show up in your emotions. You know, when it dawns on you that you know that you’re saved, you may get very excited about it. There’s nothing wrong with that. One man said, “Man, when I got saved, I was saved. I was plowing. I got saved in a cornfield and tore up an half an acre of corn. It was kind of hard on the corn, but that’s okay.” But, that man who got saved plowing and who tore up a half an acre of corn is no more saved than a ten-year-old girl who comes down this aisle this morning and sweetly gives her heart to Jesus Christ—no more saved. The emotions are fine. That is not the witness of the Spirit. That may be... Your emotions may play on the witness of the Spirit. You say, “Pastor, then what is the witness of the Spirit? How? Explain it.” You don’t explain it; you receive it.

God’s Spirit speaks to you that you belong to Him. *“He that [hath]...the Son hath the witness in himself”* (1 John 5:10). And, you know, so many times we’re trying to make everybody else have the same kind of an emotional experience that we have. You know, in some churches, they used to have altars where you came to the altar to kneel and get saved. Now, there’s nothing wrong with that. It’s not necessary. You can be saved back there. You can be saved up here. You can be saved in an airplane. You can be saved in a submarine. You can be saved anywhere. But, this man came to one of those old-fashioned prayer benches to get saved. And, there were some of the brothers in this country church—and sisters—who came to help him to get through. One kneeled down alongside of him while he was praying and said, “Brother, hold on. You’ll never get saved if you don’t hold on.” Another well-meaning person came up right after that and said, “Brother, let go! I never did get saved ’til I finally let go.” And, somebody else came right after that and said, “Oh, man—look for a bright light.” He said, “When you



see that bright light, you'll know you're saved." And, this man, later on, who finally did get saved, he said, "You know, between trying to hold on and let go and look for that light, I almost didn't make it." Listen, don't you impose—don't you impose—your emotions on me. I won't impose my emotions on you. We are different emotionally. The witness of the Spirit is not an emotional experience; it is a certainty, when God's Spirit speaks to your Spirit and He tells you, "You are Mine." *"He that [hath]...the Spirit hath the witness in himself"* (1 John 5:10).

### C. The Holy Spirit Witnesses Through You

The Holy Spirit of God witnesses to you; and then, the Holy Spirit of God witnesses in you. And that, my friend, is when the Holy Spirit of God can witness through you. You remember what our Lord said—Acts 1:8: *"ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me."* Man, when you have the assurance of your salvation—a "know-so salvation"—it's so much easier to be a witness because, as the apostle said, *"We are witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him"* (Acts 5:32). I'm not dependent upon eloquence. I'm not dependent upon logic. I'm not dependent upon those things in order to persuade you. And, that's the reason, before I came out here this morning, I got on my knees and said, "O God—O God—You're the witness. You witness through me." It's the Holy Spirit of God who is the witness.

### III. The Affirming Word of the Father

How do we have this assurance? The atoning work of the Savior—the water and the blood. The abiding witness of the Spirit is the third chord. Remember now, *"a threefold chord is not [easily] broken"* (Ecclesiastes 4:12). The work of the Savior, the witness of the Spirit, and here's the third chord—the word of the Father, the Word of the Father. There you see this threefold chord—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost together to bring the certainty. Now, what is the Word of the Father? I want you to listen to it here, beginning in verse 10: *"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: [and] he that believeth not God"*—now, here it is, the Father—*"he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life"*—now, underscore this next phrase—*"These things have I written unto you"*—that's the written Word, friend—*"that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may"*—K-N-O-W—*"[know] that [you] have eternal life"* (1 John 5:10–13).

Now, God gave us a record—God gave us the Bible. This is the record. "These



things have I written unto you.” (1 John 5:13) Aren’t you glad for the Bible? Say “amen,” because where did we learn about the water and the blood? Where did we learn about the witness of the Spirit? We learned about that from the Word of God. This is the threefold chord, again, that is not easily broken. God gave us His Word.

Now, it’s so very important that you believe the Word of God, because the Word of God has one central message from Genesis to Revelation. You can put it in two words. Are you ready for it? Jesus saves. That’s it. This book was not written to tell you how the heavens go; it was written to tell you how to go to Heaven. The message of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is one message: Jesus saves—Jesus saves. Now, God gave us His Word, that we might have that assurance—that we might be absolutely sure. Now, if you don’t believe the Bible, do you know what you’re doing? You’re calling God a liar. Look in verse 10—look in verse 10: *“he that believeth not God hath made him a liar”* (1 John 5:10).

Now, sometimes a person will say to me, “Well, you know, Pastor Rogers, I am trying to believe the Bible.” Oh, you are? How nice. Suppose you came to me and asked me for some information, and I said, “Here’s the way it is—one, two, three, four,” and I’d tell you some things. And, you look at me, and you say, “Well Adrian, I’m trying to believe you.” What does that say about me? “I’m trying to believe you.” You know what that means? “Now Adrian, you must be a liar part of the time. Adrian, you’re not trustworthy. I’m trying to believe you, Adrian.” Friend, listen—when you say, “Oh, I’m trying to have faith”—*“he that believeth not God hath made him a liar”* (1 John 5:10). God’s no liar. You see, listen—*“this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life”* (1 John 5:11). There is the divine, inspired Word of God, and it is settled in Heaven. Psalm 119:89: *“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.”*

The atoning work of Christ, the abiding witness of the Spirit, and the affirming Word of God—you take those three, put them together, and then you can say, “I know that I have eternal life.”

### **A. The Source of Life**

Now, let’s break it down a little bit, and let’s just see what John did say in the Word. First of all, he tells us the source of this life. Notice the record: *“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son”* (1 John 5:11). Now, that’s the source. You don’t have life if you don’t have the Lord Jesus. Apart from Jesus, there is no eternal life. Say “amen.” Apart from Jesus, there is no eternal life. “Well,” you say, “I have life.” No, you have existence. Jesus said, *“I [have] come that [you] might have life...and have it...abundantly”* (John 10:10). The source of the life is Jesus.

## B. The Substance of Life

Now, not only is Jesus the source of the life, but He's also the substance of the life. Look in verse 12: *"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life"* (1 John 5:12). Now, Christianity is Christ. It's not a creed, not a code, not a cause; it is Christ. Jesus Christ is to your Spirit what blood is to your body. It is not a religion about Him. It is not simply following His precepts. It is *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Colossians 1:27). Other teachers may point to life; Jesus says, "I am the life."

## C. The Surety of Life

Now, listen to me—the source of your life is Jesus. The substance of your life is Jesus. And, therefore, the surety of your life is Jesus. Notice verse 13: *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life"* (1 John 5:13). Now, notice—he says, *"These things have I written...that [you might] know"* (1 John 5:13). So, the surety of your life is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, suppose you and your wife filed a joint income tax return and the taxman came to you and said, "You filed a wrong return. You have not proven that you're married." You say, "Well, I know I'm married." "No, I want some proof that you're married." And, you say, "Well, man, I could...it was like yesterday I stood there at the marriage altar with Joyce." Oh, you should have seen her—you should have seen her when she came down there in that white dress. She was radiant. Oh, I remember when the pastor said, "Adrian, do you take Joyce? Wilt thou?" And, I just wilted. I remember—I remember—the emotion I had. I remember the feelings that I had. Sir, oh, I can tell you all about the joy—the commitment—in my heart." And, he says, "Well son, I'm glad that you had that experience and you feel that way, but for our records that won't count, no matter how you felt. You have something better?" I said, "Yes, I have something better. Come back tomorrow and I'll have it." And, I go down to the courthouse and I get the record where Adrian Pierce Rogers was married to Joyce Louise Gentry, and it is signed and attested to. A seal is put on it. I say, "Now, you want something better than emotion? There's the record—there's the record."

God has given to us a record. God has given to us His Word. It goes beyond emotion. Thank God for emotion. You ought to have some when you get married, but it's not the emotion that makes you married. Oh, no, no, no. Don't get married without it. But friend, let me tell you something—there's a threefold chord—the atoning work of Christ, the abiding witness of the Spirit, the affirming Word of the Father. Put them together—put them together. *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God"*—listen—*"that [you] may know that [you] have eternal life"* (1

John 5:13).

A little boy was in a revival meeting. The pastor preached from John 5, verse 24: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath [eternal] life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life”* (John 5:24). That was the message. He believed and was saved. And, you know, the devil always counterattacks, doesn’t he? On the way home, the little fellow said the devil began to whisper to him and said, “You’re not saved. You don’t feel just right. You don’t deserve it. You’re not good enough.” And, all the way home, the devil was just dogging the footsteps of that little boy. He sat on the couch, trying to get it all sorted out because he wanted the absolute assurance that he was saved. He remembered the verse—where was it? John 5:24: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you”*—*“Verily, verily”*—that means “truly, truly”—*“I say unto you”*—Jesus says He that heareth my word. He said, “I heard it”—*“and believeth on him that sent me”*—He said, “I believe”—*“hath everlasting life.”* He said, “I have everlasting life. I’ve done it. The Word said so.” He said, “By then, it seemed like Satan was under the couch.” He said, “I took the Bible and stuck it under the couch, and I said ‘Devil, read it for yourself.’” He said from there on the doubt left. Listen, when the devil gets on your trail, don’t argue with him. He’s not worth it. Point him to the Word of God and step out of the argument. Let him argue with God Himself.

*“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life”* (1 John 5:13). “Pastor, only God can say who’s saved.” That’s exactly right, and He has. *“He that hath the Son”*—verse 12—*“hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life”* (1 John 5:12). Do you have Him? The Holy Spirit of God is here today, telling you there was One who came by water and blood, who died for you. And, as I’m preaching to you, He’s saying, “That is right. That is true.” He is witnessing to you right now.

## Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer and close your eyes. And, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed... Now remember, you can receive the witness of God. *“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater”* (1 John 5:9). It is more than what Adrian is telling you today; it is what God is telling you. Would you pray this prayer if you want to be saved?

“Dear God. I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, thank You for paying for my sin with Your blood on the cross. I believe You’re the Son of God. I believe that God raised You from the dead, and I now receive You as my Lord, and Savior, and Master forever. Save me, Lord Jesus, and help me never to be

ashamed of You. Save me by Your grace and keep me for Your glory. Save me, Jesus. And, Lord Jesus, I thank You for doing it. I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of You, and I will live for You the rest of my life as You give me strength.” Father God, I just pray that many will say this today and mean it. In Your holy name. Amen.

# A Know-So Salvation

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** October 1, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 John 5:5–15

*“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”*

1 JOHN 5:13

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Eternal Work of the Savior
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  - A. He Witnesses to Us
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles today, would you please, and find 1 John chapter 5, and we're going to begin reading in verse 5—1 John chapter 5. We're beginning in verse 5. I want to talk to you today on this subject: “A Know-So Salvation”—“A Know-So Salvation.” 1 John chapter 5, verse 5: *“Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is He that came by water and blood, 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. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. 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. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath*

*not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:5–13).* Look especially at that last phrase: *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may”—*and what’s that next word?— *“know.” “That ye may know that ye have eternal life.”*

I’m speaking today on “A Know-So Salvation.” You ought to be able to say, “Praise God! Glory to God! I know that I’m saved!” And yet, many Christians don’t know that they’re saved. They’re going around with their shoulders all bent over, drooping, and wondering and worrying. They remind me of question marks with their heads bent over rather than exclamation points standing up straight and tall, and saying, “I know whom I have believed.” Rather than being a shouting Christian, they’re a doubting Christian. Rather than having a know-so salvation, they have a hope-so salvation. Friend, John said, “I wrote this that you might know that you have eternal life.” Dwight L. Moody said, “I’ve never met anybody who was any good to the service of Christ who first of all did not have the assurance of his or her salvation.”

Now you ought to be able to say therefore, “I know that I know that I know that I’m saved and am on my way to heaven,” if indeed you’re saved. Somebody said, “If you could have it and not know it, friend, you could lose it and not miss it.” But the truth of the matter is, if you do have it, you will know it. And if you have it and know it, you can never lose it. Praise the dear Lord for this wonderful, wonderful know-so salvation that we have in the Lord Jesus!

But I mean, how do we know the things that we know? Is it audacious for a man to say, “I know that I’m saved”? Is he some kind of maniac? Are we bragging on ourselves if we say that we know that we’re saved? Not at all! “Well,” you say, “Brother Rogers, how do you know it’s just not something that you’ve psyched yourself into? I mean, how do you know it’s not autosuggestion? How do you know it’s not just wishful thinking? How do you know that all of you have not just gotten together and compiled these religious thoughts and just made yourselves believe them? How do you know that you’re not just a group of superstitious people who are filled with emotion and sentimentality? How do you know what you know? What is the source of your certainty? What is the basis of your believe?” How can we say, “I know that I’m saved; I know if I died right now I’d go straight to heaven; I know my sins are forgiven; I know Christ lives in my heart”? How can we know that we know? How can we have this know-so salvation?

That’s what John is dealing with in his book. He tells us why he wrote his book. First John 5:13: *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.”* John said, “That’s why I wrote it.” As a

matter of fact, if you read that little epistle of 1 John, you find out that he uses this word *know* at least 40 times. Forty different times he uses this word *know*—k-n-o-w. If you were to take your pen and draw a circle around each time he uses that little word *know*, it would look like a polka-dotted piece of material. Know! Know! Know! All the way through there.

And then in these few verses that I've read to you, another word crops up. It's the word that is translated, "witness," "record," "testify," or "testimony." And in the verses that I read to you, this word is used at least 10 times. Now even though it may be translated "record," "testimony," "testify," or "witness," it is the same word in the Greek language, or it roots in the same word. That is, 10 times he's using a word that says, "I have given you a witness," "I have given you a record," "I have given you a testimony," "I have given you a basis for your belief," "I have given you a foundation, a bedrock, a rock of ages, that you can stand upon and therefore you can say, 'I know that I'm saved.'" You're not walking around on eggshells and Jell-O. Friend, this thing called "faith" has some spiritual steel and concrete in it. It is real, and God has given us some authentic, bona fide witnesses, a testimony, that we might know that we know that we're saved and going to heaven.

Now John mentions three witnesses. All three of them work together to confirm to the heart of the believer that his sins have been forgiven and he's on the glory road bound for heaven. What are they? First of all, there is the eternal work of the Savior. Secondly, there is the internal witness of the Spirit. And thirdly, there is the external Word of the Scriptures. Now you put these together and you have a threefold cord that is not easily broken (Ecclesiastes 4:12). You have God's guarantee. You have the source of your certainty. You have the basis of your belief. And therefore you can stand up tall and say, "Praise God, I know that I know that my sins are forgiven! I know that I'm glory bound! I know that I'm saved!"

Now let's look at these three things that John talks to us about.

## **I. The Eternal Work of the Savior**

First of all, let's look at the eternal work of the Son of God—the eternal work of the Son of God, the eternal work of the Savior. Verses 5 and 6: *"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"* And what did the Son of God do? Look in verse 6: *"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood."*

Now what does that refer to? Well, if you were to go back to John the nineteenth chapter, you would find that the Lord Jesus Christ, when He was crucified, when He hung in agony and blood upon that cross, He finally expired. He yielded up His Spirit. But before He did, He said, "Father, it is finished" (John 19:30). And that cry, one word



in the Greek language, *tetalestai*, means, “It is paid in full”; “It is done, paid in full, the ransom is paid.” And then a Roman soldier came and took a spear, and he took that spear and he drove it into the side of Jesus Christ. And John tells us in the nineteenth chapter of John that out of the side of Jesus came forth blood and water—blood and water (John 19:34).

Notice what John says over here again in chapter 5, in verse 6: *“This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ: not by water only, but by water and blood.”* And this tells us of the agony of Christ upon the cross. Physicians tell us that a person can be in such duress, in such agony, that there actually comes within the blood a breakdown of the components of the blood, and that liquid, that fluid, that clear fluid is separated to a watery substance from the platelets there in the blood. And so there is a substance, a watery substance, and our blood is made up primarily of water that separates from the other substance in the blood. So that if a person is under extreme duress, this happens. That’s what happened to Jesus.

It tells us of the agony of Christ upon the cross. The prophet said, prophesying of Jesus, “There is no sorrow like my sorrow” (Lamentations 1:12). Nobody ever suffered like Jesus. I want to tell you that all of the sins of the world were distilled upon Jesus. All of the eternities were compressed upon Jesus. And Jesus suffered a million hells for every one of us on that cross. Jesus did not die, I think, by the nails, nor by the lash. But Jesus died of a broken heart. The Bible says, “he yielded up the spirit” (Matthew 27:50).

Now Jesus came by water and by blood. And when He died that way, the Bible is teaching us something very wonderful. Do you remember in the Old Testament reading that when a person would come into that Old Testament tabernacle to worship? And by the way, that Old Testament tabernacle pictured Jesus. You know that, don’t you? The Bible says concerning Jesus, *“The Word was made flesh, and [tabernacled] among us”* (John 1:14), in the Gospel of John. The Word that is translated “dwelt” in the Gospel of John is literally “tabernacle.” That tabernacle was a picture of Jesus. And as you came to that Old Testament tabernacle, first you came to the altar, that brazened altar where the blood was shed, and then past the altar you came to a basin called a laver, where there was water: blood and water. The blood was for the cleansing of sin immediately, but the laver was for the continual cleansing of sin, where the priest would wash in the laver, and it pictures that Christ is not only our salvation, but our sanctification.

Do you remember what Emily just sang?

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee;  
Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy wounded side which flowed,*

*Be of sin the double cure;  
Save from wrath*

—that's the altar—

*and make me pure. (Augustus M. Toplady)*

—that's the laver.

You see? It's all wrapped up there: when Jesus came by water and by blood. Thank God that the blood saves me and the water keeps me saved. You see, I have not only salvation, but sanctification, in the Lord Jesus. He came by water, and He came by blood. And this is His eternal work. It is finished! It is done, paid in full. Glory! Hallelujah! That's the basis of my belief. Friend, there was a time when Jesus died for my sins, and He paid that sin in full. He came by water and by blood! And so one of the witnesses that I have, and the source of my certainty, is the eternal work of Christ.

## **II. The Internal Witness of the Spirit**

But I have another source of certainty. Continue to read here in the last part of verse 6 of this chapter and look at it: *"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 watch this: *"And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. 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. He that believeth on the Son of God"*—watch it now—*"hath the witness in himself."* That's the reason why I call this the internal witness of the Spirit.

Now friend, thank God for the eternal work of Christ: the water and the blood. But then the Holy Spirit comes. And the Bible says, *"There are three that bear witness in earth."* There is the Spirit and the water and the blood. What does that mean? It means that the Holy Spirit of God takes what Jesus Christ did on the cross and He makes it known to me. How can I understand all of this? Not because I figure it out, or not because some clever preacher convinced me of it. I've told you before, and I'll tell you again that anything I can talk you into, somebody else can talk you out of. That's the reason we're so dependent upon the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit of God that takes the water and the blood and applies it to your heart. It is the Holy Spirit of God that says these things are true. I would hate by my power of persuasion to have to make a Christian out of somebody. But thank God there is one who witnesses: the Holy Spirit of God.

Now let me tell you how He witnesses to you. Dear friend, first, He witnesses to you. Then He witnesses in you. And then He witnesses through you. Let me show you what I'm talking about.

## A. He Witnesses to Us

First of all, He witnesses to you. That's in verse 8 and verse 9. Look in verse 9: *"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater."* Now Adrian Rogers is telling you that Christ died for your sins. That's fine. But you need more than that. You need something besides what I'm saying. There needs to be someone who authenticates it. I tell you, the airways are filled with quacks and fools and ignoramuses and everything else, and people are so confused. How are they going to know? There needs to be someone who speaks to your heart.

Thank God we do receive the witness of men, and we live in the normal realm by the witness of men. I mean, you'll go out and buy a meal. How do you know it's not poison? "Well," you say, "I just have to take his word for it." You get on an airplane. How do you know that man knows how to fly? And if he does know how to fly, how do you know he didn't decide to be on a kamikaze mission today? Or you go to a doctor and allow that doctor to put you to sleep and slice you open. My goodness! Do you ever think about that? You talk about faith! He says, "Well, you need to have your gizzard taken out," and so you just lie down there, and he puts you to sleep and slices you open and probes around in your innards and sews you back up.

Look. We receive the witness of men all the time. You could not exist without receiving the witness of men. We live in the natural realm by receiving the witness of men. *"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater."* And God's Holy Spirit is the preacher here today. The Apostle Peter said, *"We are witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him"* (Acts 5:32).

Do you know what thrills me as I preach? And I try never to come through those doors without breathing and saying, "Lord God, anoint me to preach!" And I want to say, with the prophet of Isaiah, *"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; [for] the LORD hath anointed me to preach"* (Isaiah 61:1). And what thrills me as I preach is this: that I know that what is happening here today is more than logic, more than rhetoric, more than persuasion. God's blessed Holy Spirit is here saying, "That's true." *"We are witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him."*

You see, I am not dependent upon talking you into it. That's the reason we must pray and ask God the Holy Spirit to come. All is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down. He is the one who witnesses to us. He's the One who makes these things real to us so that we might repent and get saved.

## B. He Witnesses in Us

And then when we repent and get saved, as He witnesses to us, in verse 9, then in

verse 10, He begins to witness in us. Look in verse 10: *“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.”* Now He stops witnessing to us and begins to witness in us. He moves on the inside. We get saved. God’s Holy Spirit takes up residence in us, and now He begins to tell us from the inside. *“My child, since you have believed on Christ, now you are the Son of God. You belong to God.”* And the Bible says in another place that God’s Spirit *“beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”* (Romans 8:16).

Now what is that witness of the Spirit? What is the work of the Holy Spirit that bears witness in me that I’m a child of God? I want to say, dear friend, it is not emotion. It is not some kind of a feeling. Don’t ever think that the witness of the Spirit is an emotional feeling. Salvation is not based upon emotional feeling, nor is assurance based upon emotional feeling. The Bible never said, *“Feel a certain way and be saved.”* And therefore you cannot know that you’re saved by the way that you feel.

And if you depend upon your feelings for the assurance of your salvation, the assurance of your salvation is going to go up and down with the condition of your liver. One day you’re going to wake up and you’ll say, *“Boy, I really feel great! Hot dog! Boy, this is wonderful! Glory!”* Another day you’ll wake up and everything will be bad. You’ll have a dull headache and feel like the Russians marched through your mouth barefooted last night. And you’ll say, *“Oh, it’s terrible! The whole world’s caving in!”* What happened? Nothing happened. You just feel bad, maybe ate too much sauerkraut and ice cream. I don’t know what happened to you. It has nothing to do with your salvation. Remember what Sidlow Baxter said when he was here? *“Your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature. Salvation is the deepest work of God, and God doesn’t do His deepest work in the shallowest part.”*

Now there’s nothing wrong with feelings. If it makes you happy to be happy, go ahead and be happy. I don’t care. Nothing wrong with feelings. But you cannot say that you know that you’re saved by emotions. Now your emotions might key on your assurance, and thereby you’d be happy. But you can’t say, *“I’m happy. I know I’m saved because I’m happy.”* The best you can say is, *“I’m happy because I know I’m saved.”* See? That happiness there would be the fruit of your assurance, not the root of your assurance.

What is the witness of the Spirit? Now the Spirit is the organ of knowledge. And you see, dear friend, He testifies in you. He tells you that you belong to Jesus. It is not an emotional feeling, but it is an awareness. I cannot explain it to you exactly how I know. *“For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of the man that’s in him?”* (1 Corinthians 2:11). That simply means there are some things that are non-transferable. There are some things that have to be experienced to be understood. But I’m telling you this: God’s Spirit tells me I belong to Jesus. I can’t explain it to you. It is more than an

emotional feeling. But down deep in the innermost recesses of this person named Adrian Rogers there is God's blessed, wonderful Holy Spirit that says, "Adrian, you belong to Jesus Christ." And that blessed Holy Spirit that witnessed to me now witnesses in me.

And that's the reason, friend, you're not going to shake me with one of your arguments. Let me tell you something. A Christian *with an* experience *is never at the mercy of an* unbeliever *with an* argument, because he has the witness in himself.

Suppose now that these two guys over here, Ken and Tom, are arguing about an apple pie that Bob and I had. Suppose Ken says, "I don't believe there is such a thing as apple pie." And Tom says, "Well, if there is, I don't believe it's any good." And suppose Bob and I were over here eating apple pie. Listen. We don't worry about what those guys say, because we've got the witness in ourselves. Isn't that right? See? I mean, they could sit over there with their theories all they want, but "*he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself*"— "*in himself*." Glory to God!

### C. He Witnesses Through Us

Now listen to me, friend. When the Spirit of God witnesses to you, and you receive Christ, and then He witnesses in you, it is then that He can witness through you. You see, you'll never be a great soul winner until you have that full assurance of your own salvation. You can't say, "You come follow me—I don't know where I'm going." No, no, no, no! You see that scripture that I mentioned to you before in Acts chapter 5: "*We are witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him*." It is then that the will of God will use you to convince others that Jesus is the Son of God.

## III. The External Witness of the Word

So what is the basis of my belief? What is the source of my certainty? What is the rock upon which I stand? Number one, the eternal work of Christ. He came by water and by blood. He did it. He died. It's finished. It's paid in full. But then the internal witness of the Spirit who witnesses to me, in me, and through me, that these things are true. But thirdly, there's something else. There is the external witness of the Word—the external witness of the Word. Now look, if you will, here beginning in the middle of verse 10: "*He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God hath gave of His Son*." Just underscore the word *record*, "the record that God gave of His Son." And verse 11: "*And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. 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, and that ye may believe on the*

*name of the Son of God*" (1 John 5:10–13).

Now look in verse 13: *"These things have I written."* That is, we have the written record. Folks, we've got a Bible. I mean, we can hold it in our hand. We can read it. We can turn the pages. We can look at it. God has given us His book. Thank God for the Bible. The Bible is our birth certificate. The Bible is a legal document that we can stand on, and this book tells us the basis of our belief, the source of our certainty. And dear friend, it is a part of that threefold cord that is not easily broken. There is the eternal work of Christ. There is the internal witness of the Spirit, and there's the external Word of God. Hallelujah! Wonderful, when you put these three things together.

Now I know this book's the Word of God. Folks, let me tell you. This is a marvelous book. This Bible is a marvelous book. I've been studying this book seriously for 35 years—seriously. Hardly a day has gone past in those 35 years that I've not been into this book, studying. I want to tell you something. I am not finding hidden flaws. I'm finding hidden beauties. The more I study this book, the more I delve into the pages of this book, what a marvelous, miraculous, wonderful book is the Bible. And God gave us the Bible that we might have assurance. *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may"*—k-n-o-w— *"know that ye have eternal life."*

Suppose I got old and senile and stood before a judge, and he was trying to work out some legal documents, and he said, "Mr. Rogers, have you ever been married?" And I'd say, "Well, I don't know. I think I was married once. I think her name was Joyce." I couldn't remember whether I was married or not. And the judge says, "Well, do you have any proof whether you're married?" "Well, I think I remember how I felt. It seemed like it was a thrill." The judge would say, "Mr. Rogers, I appreciate your emotions, but your emotions are not good enough for this court. Clerk! Go to the records. Study the records. Is there anything written down? Is there a document?" And they'd go through those records and they'd say, "Look at there! On September the 2nd, 1951, Adrian Pierce Rogers was married to Joyce Louise Gentry in Northwood Baptist Church, West Palm Beach, Florida." I've got a record written down.

Friend, I want to tell you, I've got a record. I've got a written document that I can base my salvation on that's better than my emotions, that's better than my feelings. I thank God for the promises of God that are yea and Amen in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20).

#### **A. The Bible Tells Me About the Source of This Life**

And so the Bible tells me about the life that I have. It tells me in verse 11 that the source of that life is Jesus. Look at it: *"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."* Apart from Jesus, there's no eternal life. If you

don't have Jesus, all you have is existence; you don't have life.

### **B. The Bible Tells Me About the Substance of This Life**

And not only does He tell me about the source of this life; He tells me about the substance of this life. Look, if you will, in verse 12, as He says, *"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."* This life is in Jesus Christ.

### **C. The Bible Tells Me About the Surety of This Life**

And then He tells me about the surety of this life in verse 13: *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life."* Let me tell you something, friend. Jesus is to your spirit what blood is to your body. He is the life of your spirit. No Christ, no life. All you have is existence. You don't have life. Thank God. Thank God for the assurance that we have in the Lord Jesus. And this assurance comes from His Word.

Last Tuesday night while out soul winning I talked to a man and I asked him if he wanted to receive Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. And after prayer and discussion he said he did. And I said, "Let's pray." And we prayed. And he prayed and asked Jesus Christ to come into his heart and save him. Then I said, "Now sir, I want to give you your spiritual birth certificate." And I turned to John 5, verse 24. Not 1 John—John 5:24. And I read it to him. It says this: *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life"* (John 5:24). Now I said, "Sir, let's read it again." *"Verily, verily, I say unto you."* I said, "It's Jesus who is speaking. Do you believe that?" He said, "Yes." *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word."* I said, "Have you heard His Word?" He said, "Yes." *"And believeth on him that sent me."* I said, "Have you believed on the God that sent the Lord Jesus?" He said, "Yes." And then I went on and read the next phrase, *"hath everlasting life."* I said, "Do you have everlasting life?" He said, "Well, I hope so." I said, "Let's read it again." *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word."* I said, "Have you heard His Word?" "Yes." *"And believeth on him that sent me."* "Have you believed on the God that sent Jesus?" "Yes." *"Hath everlasting life."* I said, "Do you have everlasting life?" He said, "I sure hope so." I said, "Let's read it again." *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word."* I said, "Have you heard His Word?" "Yes." *"And believeth on him that sent me."* I said, "Have you believed on the God that sent Jesus?" "Yes." *"Hath everlasting life."* "Do you have everlasting life?" He said, "Why, yes! Yes!" I said, "Who says so?" And a smile went across his face. He said, "God says so—God says so."

That's the basis of your belief. That's the source of your certainty. *"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."* Isn't it better to have God's Word than Adrian's? Isn't it better



to have God's Word than your neighbor's? Isn't it better to have God's Word than your opinions, your feelings, your emotions, your wishes, your whims? There is a document, dear friend. And I want to tell you, when you get these things working together, then you'll have that wonderful, wonderful assurance of your salvation. The eternal work of the Savior; the internal witness of the Spirit the external Word of the Father: a threefold cord that tells us that we can have a know-so salvation.

Now I want to ask a question. Is it possible that a person could be saved and not have the full assurance of his salvation? Of course! Otherwise, why would John have written this? Because he was already writing to those who believed. He said, *"These things have I written unto you that believe...that ye may know."* That is, "I want you, who are saved, I want you to have that full assurance. I'm writing to give you assurance." It's very obvious that the people that he was writing to were already saved. And there are lots of folks out here listening to me today who are really saved, but you don't have the full assurance of your salvation. You're going to heaven second-class.

Do you remember that story back in the Old Testament, the Book of Exodus, the story of the Passover? I preached on it not long ago. Do you remember that God said to His Hebrew people who were there in the land of Egypt, "Tonight the death angel is going to pass through the land of Egypt, and the death angel is going to smite the firstborn son in every home with death. They're going to die." God said the way to escape the judgment of the death angel is to take a lamb without spot and without blemish, a male of the firstlings of the flocks, slay it, take the blood of that lamb, put the blood of the lamb upon the doorpost in the lintel of the house. And God says, "When my death angel comes through the land, he's going to be looking for that blood." And God said, *"When I see the blood, I will pass over you"* (Exodus 12:13). That's why they call it the Passover. *"When I see the blood, I will pass over you."*

Now let's imagine that you're back there in the land of Egypt the night of the Passover. And there's a son who comes to his father and he happens to be the firstborn son, so he's very interested about all of this. And he comes to his father. He said, "Father, did you hear what Mr. Moses said about getting a lamb and shedding the blood and putting it on the doorpost?" "Yes, son, I heard it." "Well, Dad, since I'm the firstborn, don't you think we ought to get us a lamb and we ought to put the blood of that lamb on the doorpost?" "Certainly do, son." So they go out and the son is very interested. He watches the whole thing. He says, "Now, Daddy, let's do it right. We want to get a lamb, a male, a firstling of the flock, a lamb without spot, without blemish." And so they get this perfect lamb. They slay it exactly as they're told to do. They take the blood and put it on the doorpost and the lintel of the house, and then the sun sets. That son goes back in the corner. He sits down. He's got a nervous stomach. He can't eat. Time for bed. He doesn't go to bed. He sits there in the corner and kind of trembles a little bit and bites

his fingernails. His dad says, "What's wrong, son?" He says, "Daddy, don't you know what night this is? This is the night of judgment. Daddy, the death angel's coming through the land. The firstborn." "But son, we've applied the blood. There it is." "I know it, Daddy. Oh, I hope I'm safe." "Oh, but Son, there's..." "I know, Daddy. I know. I really want to be safe. I really hope I'm safe. I really do, Dad. I hope I'm safe." And he spends a miserable night until that sun rises in the east over the land of Egypt and the birds begin to sing in the morning. And he says, "Oh, hallelujah! Hallelujah! I made it!"

Now I want you to notice another son in the land of Egypt that night. This son, also a little Hebrew boy, says to his dad, "Dad, you know what Moses said about the blood of the lamb? We'd better get us a lamb and put the blood upon the doorpost." And he says, "Yes, son, we'll do it." And they do it exactly as Moses said to do it. That little boy thanks his dad for doing it. He goes and eats a big supper. He says, "Dad, excuse me. I just believe I'll turn in—so sleepy, Dad." And the little ole fellow goes back and gets on his bed and closes his eyes, and into dreamland he goes. And his sleep is so sweet. We have to go into his room and wake him up. And we say, "Son, wake up! How can you be sleeping tonight? Don't you know the death angel is coming?" "Oh, well, I know that. But look, don't you see the blood? We put the blood on the doorpost. We did what God said. Why should I stay awake? God can't lie. God's going to keep His Word. Now you're interrupting my sleep. Would you excuse me, please? I'm going back to sleep."

Now I want to ask you a question. Which of those two boys were the safest? Be careful. They were both just as safe, because the blood was there—because the blood was there. Which one enjoyed the night more? The second one, of course.

Now remember this: It is the blood that makes us safe, but it is the Word that makes us sure. Oh, the Word makes us sure. You see, there are lots of people who are safe, but they're not sure. I mean, they have really received Christ as their personal Savior. They've trusted Jesus. They've been saved. They've been born again. They have really repented of their sin. But what miserable souls they are because they will not take God at His Word! They will not read 1 John chapter 5, verse 13: *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life."* Praise God for the assurance that we have, that we may know Him.

## Conclusion

Now before I close, I want to say one other thing. I am not trying to give assurance to those of you who've not been saved. You have no right for assurance. It would be a terrible thing if you've never been saved and had some false assurance. Understand what I'm saying?

Let's imagine another boy. Let's imagine Pharaoh's son. And Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, has a son, and the son says to Pharaoh, "Hey, Dad, have you been hearing what

Moses has been saying about a lamb and the blood of the lamb? Say, Dad, don't you think we'd better get us a lamb and kill it and put the blood upon the doorpost of the royal palace?" And Pharaoh says, "Son, forget that blood of the lamb stuff. We have our priests. We have our religion. Son, we are a very religious family." And they were. You talk about religions, friend. Egypt had religion. "Now son, you go to sleep and don't you worry about a thing. Daddy's got everything in control. We have our religion, and I want to tell you, it's the best religion in the world, the Egyptian religion." And that boy goes to sleep that night, and he sleeps peacefully, but it is the sleep of death, because that night he died because there was no blood.

Now what I'm trying to tell you, friend, is this: I don't want you to have a false assurance. I'm not telling anybody here today that you can know that you've been saved and that you can say, "Thank God, I know that I am saved," who has not repented of his sin and received Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. But if you have, then let those three witnesses give you the peace that you ought to have.

# The Simplicity of Salvation

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: July 13, 1997**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 John 5:13**

*“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”*

1 JOHN 5:13

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## Introduction

Take God's Word and find 1 John—not the Gospel of John, but 1 John chapter 5 and verse 13. I've been working on my memory work a little bit, so I want you to look at it. I'm using the King James Version of the Scripture. You look at it, and I'm going to step off over here to the side and see if I can get it right, so you check me out, okay?

First John chapter 5, verse 13—are you ready? “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may hope that you have eternal life.” Got it wrong. All right: “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may guess that you have eternal life.” “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may wish that you had eternal life.”

What word is that that I’m missing? Okay. Oh, I see, all right: “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may—k-n-o-w—know that you have eternal life.” Now, folks, God wants us to know it. Amen? I don’t want to talk to you about a hope-so, maybe-so, wish-so salvation, but a know-so salvation.

Somebody said if you could have it and not know it, you could lose it and not miss it. Truth of the matter is, if you have it, you ought to know it, and if you do have it, you can’t lose it. And so, therefore, we need to understand what this thing called salvation is. Because John said, “I wrote the whole book of 1 John that you might know that you have eternal life.”

I hear some people say, Well, you just can’t know that you’re saved. You just have to hope that you’re saved. And, when you die, you’ll find out. I don’t want to wait till I die to find out whether I’m saved or not—I mean, after it’s too late to do anything about it. You need to have that sweet, wonderful, blessed assurance. A Christian needs to be an exclamation point, standing up straight; not a question mark, all bent over, saying, “I just wonder if I’m saved.” I want you to have an absolute know-so salvation.

Now, in order to know that you’re saved, two things are necessary. Number one, you have to know what God said to do to be saved. That’s the reason why John said, I wrote it: “These things have I written unto you.” Okay? You have to know what God said to do to be saved. That’s the first thing. The second thing is you have to do it. All right? Know what God said to do to be saved, and do it.

Now, if you don’t know what God said to do to be saved, of course, then, how are you going to know whether you’ve done it or not? Then if you know what God says to do to be saved, and you don’t do it, what right do you have to say that you’re saved? But, here our Lord is talking to us about being saved. Now, what do we mean by being saved anyway? What is salvation?

#### **A. Salvation Brings Pardon**

Well, salvation is a personal relationship with God that brings the pardon of our sin. You know, the Bible says, “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” We’re justified. That means our sins are buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness.

## **B. Salvation Brings**

And then, number two, to be saved means that we have peace with God. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now, that doesn’t mean you have a peaceful feeling. That’s not the idea here. We’re talking about a war, and we’re enemies of God, and we’re in trouble.

But, the Bible says that Jesus, by the blood of His cross, made peace, and that sin debt, that enmity, that warfare, against God is canceled out, and then the peace with God is that God is now the friend to us, and He is the benefactor, and He is the Father. No longer is He the judge and our enemy because of our sin.

## **C. Salvation Brings Power**

We have peace with God. It means, folks, pardon and peace. And it means power. We’re not alone. He comes into us. The apostle Paul said, “I’m not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation.” That word literally means “dynamite!” You see, God doesn’t just forgive your sin and say, “Now, it’s up to you.” He’s a savior, not a probationary officer. He doesn’t just say, “Now, I’ve forgiven the past. It’s up to you for the present.” It’s not a new start. You become a new creature.

## **D. Salvation Brings His Presence**

Now, there is this pardon. There is this peace. There is this power. There is this presence. When a person is saved, the Holy Spirit of God comes into him, and the Holy Spirit of God lives in him. He’s never alone. The darkest night, the most lonely road, God is with him. Jesus said, “I will send the Holy Spirit, that He may abide with you forever!” Always, never to leave you. That’s one of the reasons I believe that once you’re saved He keeps you saved, because the Bible says clearly and plainly that the Holy Spirit will abide forever.

## **E. Salvation Brings Perfection**

And then it means this, and this is just the front porch. We haven’t gotten in the house yet. But now listen. There’s this pardon. There’s this peace. There’s this power. There’s this presence. And to be saved literally means that God gives you perfection.

Now, that doesn’t mean you’re going to sprout wings and get a halo. Doesn’t mean you’ll never sin again. Doesn’t mean that you can’t say another bad word. It doesn’t mean that you’ll never have another evil thought. But in God’s sight—in God’s sight—when you get saved, the Bible speaks of the spirits of just men made perfect. You will be perfect in God’s sight.

Every sin buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness, never, never, never, never ever to be brought up against you again. God demands perfection. God doesn’t grade on the curve. And, therefore, without the precious blood of Jesus that provides in God’s sight that perfection, you could never ever hope to go to heaven.

Now, all of that is by way of introduction. Let me talk to you now about how to be saved. And I'm asking that we'll put some things up here on the screen, if we will.

## **I. The Nature of Human Nature**

First of all, let me talk to you about the nature of human nature. What did God make when He made a man, a woman? Well, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 23 says this: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly." That means w-h-o-l-l-y; that means completely, wholly. That means, every part of you. "And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." So you are spirit, soul, and body.

Now, let's talk about you. I'm going to ask them to put a picture of you up here on the platform, right up there. There you are. All right, there you are—a body, soul, and spirit—1 Thessalonians 5, verse 23. Now, let's talk about this part of your nature, because all of this has to do with salvation.

### **A. You Have a Body**

First of all, you are a body. You have a body. You live in a body. You're sitting there in a body, right? Right. Okay, you've got a body. That's the spacesuit you wear, while you're on spaceship Earth. So you have a body. You live in a body. That's obvious. None of us would doubt that.

### **B. You Have a Soul**

Now, the second thing is not quite as obvious. Paul also spoke of a **soul**. I pray God your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Greek word for soul is the word *psuche*. It's the word we get psychiatry from, psychology from, psychological, psychic. All of these words, they refer to the soul. The soul is the you. That's your personality, your idiosyncrasies, your intelligence, your sense of humor—all of those little proclivities that make you the uniquely wonderful person that you are. That is your soul. Roughly speaking, your soul is mind, emotion, and will. You live inside this body. You have a soul. Okay? You have a soul.

### **C. You Have a Spirit**

Now, look at the center. There is the spirit. Now, what is the spirit? You know, I used to think that soul and spirit were about the same thing—six of one, half a dozen of another—just the invisible part of a person. But the Bible clearly makes a distinction between soul and spirit.

Remember our verse? "And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Put in your margin, if you're making notes, Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is quick and powerful,



sharper than any two-edged sword, dividing asunder between soul and spirit.”

Well, what is the difference between the soul and the spirit? Both the soul and spirit are invisible. Both the soul and spirit are inseparable. But they are not the same. The spirit is that part of you that makes you unique, different from any of the animals or any of the plants. God did not give to animals a spirit. God gave to man a spirit. It is that quality in human nature that enables you to know and worship God, for the Bible says—and I know you know this verse, many of you—“God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him, how? In spirit and in truth.”

The Bible teaches that when we get saved, God’s Spirit—that’s the Holy Spirit—bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. See, plants have a body, but they don’t have a soul. Animals have a soul. Animals have mind, emotion, and will, but they don’t have a spirit. Only man has a spirit. Only man can worship God. Only man can pray. Only man can conceive of eternity.

So God, when He made Adam, made Adam healthy in his body, happy in his soul, and holy in his spirit. That’s the way the first man was made—healthy, happy, holy. Healthy in his body—you see, with your body you know the physical world, the world beneath you. With your soul, you know the psychological world, the world around you. With your spirit, you know the spiritual world, the world above you. When your body is right, you’re healthy. When your soul is right, you’re happy. When your spirit is right, you’re holy. That’s the way God made you to function.

## **II. What Does It Mean to Be Lost?**

All right now, that is the nature of human nature. Now, let’s have the next slide up here, and look at it for a moment. What does it mean to be lost? You know, we talk about being saved. Well, who needs to get saved? Well, those who need to get saved are those who are lost. And why did Jesus come to earth? Did Jesus come to earth to feed the hungry? Did Jesus come to earth to heal the sick? Did Jesus come to earth to educate people? No! Why did Jesus come to this earth? For one reason. He tells us what it is in Luke 19:10. Do you see it? “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”—that which was lost. Now, that’s the condition of every man, woman, boy, and girl without the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, how did man get lost? Let’s look at the next slide, if we can here for a moment.

Now, again, I want to remind you how man was meant to function. There’s his body—the body houses the soul; and in the spirit—you see that triangle there—I’ve written the word *God*. And I did it with a triangle because God is a triune God, isn’t He? Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And there is God in the human spirit.

### **III. How to Function with Unction**

Now, here is the way to function with unction. You see, God's Holy Spirit comes into our human spirit, and the Bible says we know the things that are given to us of God by the Spirit that He's given to us.

So, the Holy Spirit, down in the very deepest precincts, the Holy of holies of man—that is, the Holy Spirit of God—He is there telling us what to do intuitively in the spirit.

#### **A. The Spirit Speaks to the Soul**

Now, the Spirit is to speak to the soul—the mind, the emotion, and the will. And the Spirit gives the mind discernment; the Spirit gives the emotions impulses; the Spirit gives the will impulses. And so, the Holy Spirit in the human spirit speaks to the soul—the mind, the emotion, and the will.

#### **B. The Soul Speaks to the Body**

Now, what does the soul do? The soul speaks to the body—the hands, the feet, the eyes, the ears, the body. The soul motivates the body.

#### **C. The Body Moves Out into the World**

And what does the body do? The body moves out into the world. Now, whose life is being manifested? The life of God. God the Holy Spirit, in the human spirit, through the soul, to the body, out into the world. And so, we're just showing the life of God. Does that make sense? Nod your head. Okay. That makes sense, okay. You understand what we're talking about so far. Here's the way a man is supposed to function with unction. Now, we're going to talk about what it means to be lost. Let me show you the next slide.

All right now, look up here. Notice now where the spirit was; there's just a dark void right there. Because what happened when Adam sinned is this: Remember that God made Adam healthy, happy, and holy, and God was living in Adam's spirit. The Bible says God walked with Adam. Why? Because He was in Adam, and He walked with Adam. And Adam was there with God in the Garden of Eden. But Adam sinned. And when Adam sinned, do you know what happened? God moved out of Adam. God will not live in a dirty house. God is a holy God.

Remember what God said to Adam in the Garden of Eden, and to Eve? He warned them about the forbidden fruit. And God said, "In the day that you eat of this forbidden fruit, you will surely die. In the day, in the very day!" God said, "You're going to die." Well, question: did Adam die that day? Well, if you'll read your Bible, you'll find out that he went on operating for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years. And yet, God had said, in the day that you eat thereof, you will die. Well, did he die? Yes, he died. He did not die immediately in his soul. He did not die immediately in his body. Where did he die? In his spirit.

#### IV. Death Is the Separation of the Spirit from God

Now, what is death, precious friend? Death is not the separation of the soul from the body. If I were to go, “HHUU!” and fall down here, my doctor’s sitting right over here. He’d come up here, and he’d, you know, tap around on me, do those things that they do. And he might stand up and say, “Folks, I hate to tell you this, but he’s gone. He’s dead.” Well, don’t you tell them I’m dead. *I won’t be dead. I’ll be kicking up gold dust on the streets of glory*, right? I can’t die. Jesus said, “He that lives and believes in me shall never die.” You’re looking at a man who can’t die.

Death is not the separation of the soul from the body. Death is the separation of the spirit from God. Death is the separation of the spirit from God. Adam died immediately in his spirit. Adam died progressively in his soul. Adam died ultimately in his body.

About Christmastime, you go out there and buy a Christmas tree, and you say, “Are we going to have a live tree this year?” “Yea, let’s get a live tree this year. I want a live tree.” So you go down there and buy one of those trees. It’s been cut. You call that a live tree? You wait till New Year’s. Now, folks, that’s not a live tree. It just looks live. But, see, it’s been cut off from the source of life. And what happened when it was severed will show up about New Year’s, you see. And, you may decorate it. A lot of folks come to church and decorate themselves on Sunday morning, but they’re dead. They’re dead. Why? They’re spiritually dead. Their mind, emotion, and will is operating. Their body is operating. But they are minus God in the spirit.

What do you have to do to be lost? Rob a bank? No! Commit murder? No! Commit perversion? No! I’ll tell you what you have to do to be lost is just nothing, because you are lost by nature. We are born with a depraved nature. The Bible teaches that we are, by nature, the children of wrath, and we inherited that nature from Adam. And, you can be fine, upstanding, wonderful, religious. God told Nicodemus—a better man outwardly, morally, religiously, than any man, woman, boy, girl in this building—he had to be born again in order to see the kingdom of heaven. So what does it mean to be lost? It just simply means to be minus God!

#### V. Salvation Is Getting God out of Heaven Back into Man

Now, let me tell you what salvation is. *Salvation is not primarily getting man out of earth into heaven. It is getting God out of heaven back into man.* Getting God right back there where He belongs, because God moved out because of sin, and all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Let me see the next one up there, and let’s see what we’ve got up there. Now, let’s talk about what it means to be saved.

Now, you know, sometimes people mock us and ridicule Bible-believers for talking about being saved. To them it’s, you know, if Hollywood wants to ridicule a Bible-believer, they will find some preacher talking sometime about being saved, and he’ll be

talking about heaven and hell, and all that. They think that is so funny! They think that is ridiculous! But, folks, I want to tell you the Bible says, in Luke 19:10, we've already seen that the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

And, when Paul talked to a Philippian jailer one night after an earthquake in that jail, and that jailer was so scared and frightened that he was about to commit suicide, Paul, he asked Paul and Silas, says, "What must I do to be saved?" and they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

## **VI. Man Has a God-Shaped Vacuum That He Is Trying to Fill**

Now, let's look at the next one here for just a moment. You see, here's the situation. Up in heaven is holy God. And, let the gold on that slide represent His glory. Down below, now, is sinful man, and sin has separated us from a holy God. There is a wedge, a chasm, between holy God and sinful man. Now, you see those arrows there, some of them longer than others? They represent man's effort to come to God. And man has a God-shaped vacuum, where God was there in the spirit. Man is never satisfied. Animals can be satisfied, but not man. Man's riding motorcycles, climbing mountains, acquiring money, planting flowers, inventing things. Man has a void. He's seeking. He's trying to find. "Friends all around me are trying to find what the heart yearns for, by sin undermined." Man has an empty void!

St. Augustine said, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are empty, restless, until they rest in Thee." So, man is constantly trying to reach God! Now, he may not even know that it's God he's trying to reach, but there's a void, an emptiness. But he keeps bouncing off of that sin barrier. For the Bible says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

## **VII. Sin Is Coming Short of the Glory of God**

Let me give you the best definition of sin that I know of. It's coming short of the glory of God. Do you know what sin is? It's just everything in us that's not like God. And there's a lot of it, isn't there? There's a lot of it. I mean, don't go strutting your stuff, folks. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Now, don't you stretch yourself out in the gutter alongside some old hypocrite and say, I'm longer than he is. So what! I hear people say, "Well, I'm just as good as those folks down there at the church." I'm looking for a man who's honest enough to say, "I'm just as bad as those folks down there at the church. Hey listen, folks. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All—A double L! That means me; that means you; that means us; that means every mother's child. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God! You say, "Well, I don't want to go to hell, for Adam's sin." Okay, you'll go for your own. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And so, man is trying

to reach God, but he keeps ricocheting off of this sin barrier.

All right, let's look now and see what God has done. Now, up there is still God in heaven. And down here is man on earth. Do you see that? Okay. But now notice an arrow coming down out of heaven. Do you know what that represents? That represents the incarnation. That represents God in glory stepping out of heaven. You see, God looked down at us, and God loves us while we're sinners. The Bible says, "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The fact that we have sinned and that sin has separated us from God has not stopped God from loving us. And God, moved in mercy by the pitiful plight of sinful man, said, "I will do something." And so, this time, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, planned our salvation, and God the Son, the Lord Jesus, left heaven, came out of those ivory palaces, down to this world of woe. You see where the point of that arrow is? In your mind, just say, Christmas—Christmas, Christmas. A baby was born, born of a virgin. As much God as if He were not man at all, but as much man as if He were not God at all. He had to be a man to pay sin's price. Our domain, our legacy, was forfeited by a man, so, the Bible teaches that through Adam all died, but in Christ all are made alive. He had to become a man to redeem our lost estate. And so, God took human flesh and the infinite became an infant. And He was born there on Christmas Day. That man's name is the one that Debbie sang about this morning. That man's name is Jesus—Jesus! And, what did the angel tell Mary? "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sin." The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Thou shalt call Him Jesus.

## **VIII. The Cross Bridged the Chasm Between God and Man**

Now, what did Jesus do? Let me show you the next verse here—next slide. Look at it. Jesus said—look—"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." What did Jesus do? Jesus died upon that cross, and now with the rough hewn timbers of the cross He has constructed a bridge between man and God. Now, man tried to cross that chasm and bring himself to God, but he keeps bouncing off the sin barrier. But Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man—no man—cometh unto the Father but by Me." Be reasonable, folks. Don't get the idea that Jesus is a good way to heaven. He is not a good way to heaven; He is the only way to heaven. Acts 4:12: "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." I want to ask you this question: if there were some other way to heaven, don't you think God would've taken it? Do you think God would've let His darling Son die upon that cross in agony and blood, had there been some other way? That's the reason the apostle Paul says in the book of Galatians, "If righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain." If you could be

saved by being good, pray tell, why did Jesus die upon that cross? He didn't die as a martyr. It wasn't an accident. He was crucified before the foundation of the world. Why? God came to earth, that we might go to heaven. He became the son of man, that we might become sons and daughters of God. He was born of a virgin, that we might be born again. He carried my sin, your sin, our sin, to the cross! And the Bible says, "With the blood of His cross, He hath reconciled God and man."

## **IX. Man Is Saved by Believing on Jesus**

Let me show you the next slide here. Look at this, if you will, for a moment. Now, what must I do to be saved? "And they said,"—listen to it—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." I'm glad he didn't say, "Everybody want to be saved, run around the block." Some little children, crippled, can't run. I'm glad he didn't say, "Everybody that wants to be saved, read the Bible through." Some people can't read. I'm glad he didn't say, "Everybody that wants to be saved give a thousand dollars." Some folks don't have a thousand dollars. But there's one thing anybody can do, and everybody must do, in order to be saved, and the same thing that the Paul told that Philippian jailer is what I'm going to tell you today. "What must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Remember what *saved* means? It means that pardon; it means that presence; it means that power; it means that perfection. It means all of that.

## **X. Salvation Means That Christ Controls Your Life**

Now, let me show you again. Look at this, if you will please. In everybody's life there is a control center. You've seen this in the little Four Spiritual Laws tract. There is a control center that looks like a throne. There's a throne there. And, sitting on that throne is a big "E." Do you know what that stands for? Ego. Self. Because, you see, when man becomes spiritually dead, and God moves out of his spirit, who takes over? The soul—the mind, the emotion, and the will. And here is Christ outside this life. And here is self on the throne. Now, folks, that's where most people in Memphis, and every major city, and every hamlet and village in the world is: sitting upon the throne of his or her own life, saying, "It's my life. I'm going to do what I want to do. Nobody's going to tell me what to do. Nobody's going to make me do this or that. It is my life. I'm going to run it myself." And, you see all those little circles out there? That represents the interests of life—business, family, pleasure, sex, home, vacations, education. But the problem is, that is a pretty messed up life. Self says, "Man, I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my salvation." But Christ is outside that life. And now, let me show you something else.

Here is a Christ-controlled life. This time Christ is not outside that life. Christ is in that

life, and Christ is on the throne of that life. Now, a Christian is not somebody who merely believes intellectually that Christ died for his sins. The devil believes that. A Christian is somebody who has invited Christ into his life. Now, remember our scripture that says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved”? That word believe is a Greek word that literally means trust—trust! Now, you can believe an airplane can fly, but you must trust it in order to fly on it. You must get on it. Now, here is Christ on the throne of that life, and there is the “E,” because it’s still you. It still is your life. But you’re in that life, at the foot of His throne, because Jesus Christ is Lord. And they said, “Believe on what? The Lord Jesus Christ—the Lord Jesus Christ. And thou shalt be saved!” Now, if you’re not willing to make Him Lord, He can’t be Savior. He comes in to take control of your life.

Now, you see all of those circles around there? That represents, now, the interests of life in harmony and purpose, as God intended for your life to be. “Adrian, is your life like that?” Not yet, but He’s working on me. You see, Philippians 1:6 says this: “He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.” And He is arranging my life, and He is arranging your life, and when you give your heart to Jesus Christ, He begins to take control of your life and make you the person He wants you to be. But your life doesn’t have to be in absolute perfection for you to go to heaven. The minute you trust Christ as your personal Savior, that moment you are eternally saved, eternally secure, and God now begins to work on you.

Remember what we said about Adam and how Adam died? Listen. Adam died immediately in his spirit, progressively in his soul, ultimately in his body. When you get saved, you’re justified immediately in the spirit, sanctified progressively in your soul, and glorified ultimately in your body. One day, you’re going to have a resurrected body. You’re not going to be hauled into heaven by the wrecking crew. You’re going to have a body like the Lord Jesus Christ—glorified ultimately in His body.

Now, let’s see the next slide, if we can now. And I want us to go backward in just a moment, Mr. Slide Presenter, but look at this verse—Revelation chapter 3, verse 20—the Lord Jesus says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear My voice and will open the door, I will come into him and will sup with him, and he with Me.” Now, I’m hoping today that you’re hearing His voice, because I pray that, as I speak, God the Holy Spirit will be speaking through me. Now, you must hear His voice, and then you must open the door. He’ll not break in. Go back to that former slide again, if you will, if we can do that. All right, there is a Christ-controlled life. How do you get Christ from outside up there on the throne? You have to open the door and invite Him in. Folks, it’s not enough to slip an offering under the door. It’s not enough to whisper a prayer through the keyhole. You open the door! You say, “Come into my heart, Lord Jesus.” That is the act of faith. You open wide the door. You say, “Now, come, take



control of my life. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be.”

Pastor, would Jesus save me this morning? The Bible says, “Whosoever will may come.” Does He want to save you? He says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” Some of you have kept Him knocking for a long, long time. He loves you. He didn’t come to condemn the world. He came to save the world. He wants to save you.

Let me show you the next slide here for just a moment. Now, how do you know that you’re saved? Well, if you do what He tells you to do to be saved, then you can have the assurance of your salvation. I love John 5, verse 24. That’s almost a spiritual birth certificate. Here’s what Jesus said: “He that heareth My word...”—and, folks, you’ve heard it today. I mean, I have given you scripture upon scripture. That’s the Word of God—“He that heareth My word and believeth on Him that sent Me...”—the word believe is used some ninety-nine times in the gospel of John; believe, trust—“believeth on Him that sent Me...”—believe in the God that sent the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Savior God sent—“believeth on Him that sent Me hath...”—now, notice this—“hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation...”—that means come into judgment. That means to die and go to hell—“shall not come into condemnation, but is passed”—not will pass; already is passed—“from death unto life.” Folks, when you give your heart to Jesus, it is settled, it is done, it is finished. You have passed from death unto life. You don’t get eternal life when you die. You get eternal life the minute you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. “Verily, verily...”—do you know what the word verily, verily means? It means pay attention, pay attention; this is true, this is true; listen, listen—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” Therefore, how do I know that I’m saved? Not by my feelings. Remember the verse I started with? 1 John chapter 5, verse 13: “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know.” If I depend upon my feelings, I’ll never have the assurance. If I depend upon my feelings, my assurance will vary with the condition of my liver. But I have His Word. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word—My word—and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life.”

## Conclusion

Now, you see the little train up there? Here is the way God’s train runs. Now, there’s the engine, there’s the coal car, and there is the caboose. Now, let’s say that you’re the engineer on this train, and the coal is in the middle car, and you want the train to run. Question: Would you put the coal in the caboose, or would you put the coal in the engine? That’s a dumb question. Well, you’d put the coal in the engine. Now, if you put the coal in the caboose, the train just sits there; but if you put the coal in the engine,

then the train is going to move. Right? Say amen. Right, okay. Now, the engine is the facts. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “Christ died for our sins, according to the Scripture.” God left heaven, took our sins upon the cross.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Folks, those are facts! I’m not talking to you about Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian. I’m talking to you about Bible facts. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Acts 16, verse 31—that’s a fact.

Now, what do you do with your faith? You put your faith in God’s facts. You put the coal in the engine. Don’t put faith in feeling. Don’t put the coal in the caboose. If you do, your train will just sit there. Put your faith in God’s facts. Your train begins to run, and you look behind you, and here comes the caboose. As a matter of fact, Brother Scotty, that train doesn’t even have to have a caboose to run, does it? I’ve seen trains without a caboose. You see, you don’t even have to have the feeling. Don’t get hung up on feeling. I enjoy my salvation, I really do, and I’m happy in the Lord Jesus Christ. But, folks, listen. I don’t know I’m saved because I’m happy; I’m happy because I know I’m saved. You see the difference? I’m happy because I know I’m saved. And when you begin to put your faith in God’s facts, then it dawns on you. Hallelujah! It is true! I am saved! And then, the experience, the joy, of knowing the Lord Jesus.

Now, folks, I’m going to lead you in a prayer in just a moment. And remember what salvation is. Salvation is not just simply getting out of earth into heaven. That’s a by-product. There is a heaven. I’m going there. There is a heaven! Hallelujah! But that’s the by-product. Salvation—listen—is getting God out of heaven back into man. And Jesus is standing at the heart’s door, knocking, wanting to come in. You are to open the door by faith, and if you will do so, I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, He will come into you, He will begin to change your life, as He did mine over a half a century ago. He will come into your life, and save you, and keep you.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Now, if you know that you need to be saved, or if you’re not certain that you have been saved, this is your time to get it settled. I want you to pray this prayer after me: “Lord Jesus, thank You for dying for me. Thank You for taking my sins to the cross. And I now turn from my sin, open the door of my life, step down off the throne of my life, and put You, Lord Jesus, on the throne of my life. Take control of my life. And begin now to make me the person you want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.”