

HOLINESS
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Don: Brothers, you have the lyrics in front of you. Let’s come before the God’s throne, let’s sing the first and last verses of “Holy, Holy, Holy,” since we are talking about holiness.

(The men sing): Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning
Our song shall rise to Thee.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!
Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy name
In earth and sky and sea!
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!
Amen.

Don: Let us pray. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we do come before You to adore You. You are God, and there is no other. You are God. You are highly exalted. You are the One who sits enthroned on the cherubim, and we come to worship You and to be instructed in Your word. I pray, Father, that all I say will be true to Your word. If there is anything being said that is not, please nullify that. May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to You, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Don: Okay. We’re talking today about what Bruce calls identifiable righteousness, and what I call practical righteousness. But I would like to do a brief review of what we’ve covered the past three weeks.

Three weeks ago, Ted talked about the fact that God is holy. That means that God is totally other. He is set apart and separate from His creation, as well as morally pure and perfect. He referred to a book by Rudolph Otto on holiness, and in that book he says that holiness causes something called the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, in other words, terror and fascination at the same time.

Isaiah experienced this. In Isaiah 6, he says that he” saw the LORD, high and lifted up, and his train,” (that is, His robe), filled the temple with smoke, and that there were seraphim. And, interestingly enough, even though the seraphim were sinless, they covered their faces and covered their feet in the presence of God. And they said, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD God of hosts.” Heaven and earth are full of His glory.

And what is Isaiah’s reaction? It’s not “Oh boy, this is interesting! I’m going to write a book about this someday.” No, it’s “Woe is me!” Oye vey! “For I am undone!” I’m ruined, I’m lost, I’m disintegrated! “For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

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Peter experienced something similar when, after he caught all the fish, he says, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!”

And so we come next to the point that man is not holy in and of himself. We are not holy; we are sinful. Being creatures, as we talked about last week, is not bad in and of itself, but being sinful and sinners, as we are, is. And the Scripture teaches that we are totally depraved, that sin affects every part of our being. There is a saying that has circulated for a couple years that says, “Don’t despair; you’re worse than you think you are!” (*Laughter.*) It has been said that man behaves, a lot of times, like rats. The only problem is that we would have to apologize to the rats. So, if there are any D-cons here-- (I mean deacons--), (*laughter.*) Sorry about that!

It’s really not a laughing matter, is it? It’s very, very serious. And so if, as Romans 3 says, “none is righteous, no, not one,” and if, on the other hand, God is completely holy, how in the world can we have a relationship with this holy God, and escape our just condemnation in hell forever?

Well, the solution is the imputed righteousness of Christ, the righteousness of or from God, not by which He Himself is righteous--(otherwise, we’d be toast!)--but a gift, a gift by God’s sheer grace, along with saving faith and repentance, where we, through Christ alone, through grace by faith, are covered with nothing less than the perfect righteousness and obedience of Jesus Christ. It’s imputed or counted to us. “Abraham believed God,” the Scripture says, “and it was imputed to him as righteousness.” David also says, “Blessed is the man to whom the LORD will not impute,” or count, “his sin.” It’s in that great hymn that we’ve quoted a number of times:

“My hope is built on nothing less

Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.

... All other ground is sinking sand.”

Psalm 130, verse 4 says, “LORD, if You should mark iniquity, O LORD, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”

Paul, in Romans chapter 8, verse 1, jumps for joy. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” It’s like the Good Feet Store commercial, where the guy on TV says, “No pain! Zero pain!” Well, it’s almost like Paul. You can see him jumping for joy. “No condemnation! Zero condemnation!” (*Laughter.*) Hallelujah! We can rejoice in that.

And then, last week, Ted talked about implanted righteousness, new life, accompanying regeneration. When we are regenerated by God, born again, born of Him, born from above, the first act of God’s saving grace in our lives, He gives us the gifts of repentance and saving faith. As Bruce has said so many times, life comes first, then faith.

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A lot of people get that backwards, unfortunately. But you can't have saving faith until you have life, regeneration from God.

And Ted pointed out, as John 1, verses 12 and 13 says, that we are “born not of blood,” that is, not of inheritance. We don't come because our parents are Christians, or because of our nationality, or whatever. We're not “born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh,”--human effort, human activity. Jesus said, “It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh profits” a little something.

Participant: Nothing.

Don: No, no, that's right. Nothing. (*Laughter.*) I just wanted to see if you guys were awake, that's all. (*Laughter.*) “Nor of the will of man,” which I take to mean just about the same thing, although Ted said that it also could mean human traditions and human activities, like the Pharisees were fond of. “But of God.” We are raised from spiritual death to eternal life. And since Sig put my Braille upside down, I'm going to ask him to read the first Scripture on the handout, John 5:25.

Sig: “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.”

Don: Okay. He's not talking about the end of the world, when we're raised physically. That is talked about in verse 29. But verse 25 is talking about our regeneration, being spiritually dead and then raised to eternal life. When God does this, He implants a desire for what is righteous, and pleasing to Him, though not perfect in this life, and a struggle, the flesh struggling against the Spirit. Ted talked about that in Romans 7, and, Like Ted, I am very grateful that Romans 7 is there.

Now, next on your handout is something that I apologize in advance to any women who may be listening to this, or reading the transcript, or to any overly sensitive men. (*Laughter.*) But, you know, Luther was not known for his tact and gentleness. That was not one of his outstanding virtues. And they used to have seminars in those days called “Table Talk.” Some of you may receive the Ligonier publication that is named after this. Well, Luther and his cronies would get together and discuss things, and one of the questions that came up was this. Well, as Christians, this side of glory, are we gold, or are we snow covered dung? It's kind of like that joke.

Q. How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?

A. None, if you're Baptist. (*Laughter.*)

But anyway, what are we? Are we gold, or snow covered dung? Where do we get that phrase? Well, Isaiah 1:18 says, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are crimson, they shall be as white as snow.”

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So what are we? Rome’s classic position--(and I’m not sure where the Greek Orthodox would fit into this; I would suspect that they are probably similar. Doug can correct me if I’m wrong)--but Rome would say that we are actually gold. Oh, we may be a little tarnished because of venial sins and temporal punishments that have to be dealt with, but until we commit a mortal sin, we are gold, actually and practically.

Well, what did the Reformers say? The Reformers, and I believe Scripture, says that yes, positionally, we are covered with the righteousness of Christ. Does not the Bible say that we are seated with Christ in heavenly places? Yes, it does. Heaven is a certain reality for those of us in Christ, because we are in Christ. And so, on the one hand, we are white as snow, clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

But we know, unless we have blinders on, that we still sin, don’t we? Like Luther said, with the phrase I said two weeks ago, in Latin: we are “*simil Justus et peccator.*” At the same time, we are just and sinners. And so, in that sense, we are indeed snow covered dung. Now when will we be gold?

Participant: When Christ returns.

Don: That’s right. When we’re in glory, when Christ returns, and even when we die and our souls are perfected, we will at that time be truly gold. But right now, praise God, we are more and more being conformed, by the work of the Holy Spirit, to the image of Christ. In other words, if I can get a little bit graphic, we start to smell better and better every day. (*Laughter.*) And one day we will be perfect, and hallelujah! Can’t wait!

Because of Christ in us, the final outcome is victorious. Is Ted here?

Participant: No.

Don: No! Oh, wait till I get him! I just sinned. (*Laughter.*) Rich Clark, would you read 1 Corinthians 1:7b-9 on your handout, please?

Rich: “... as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom we were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Don: Praise God! All right. Philippians 1:6. Bill McCoy, would you read that for us, please?

Bill: And I am sure of this: that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion in the day of Jesus Christ.”

Don: Okay. And then, one Scripture I didn’t put down, because I didn’t exactly know where it was, is 1 Thessalonians 5:24. He will present you blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. “God is faithful, and He will do it.” Those are precious, precious

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promises that we can hang our hats on. If there is anything that we can say “name it and claim it” to, as opposed to “blab it and grab it,” it’s this. These promises are precious, and we can trust God for these.

So now we come to what Bruce calls identifiable righteousness, or practical righteousness, which is the evidence of our sanctification. A good friend of mine, when he got the handout via email, sent this to me. It’s a very good quote from Michael Horton, and it says this.

Sig: Who is Michael Horton?

Don: Sig, who is Michael Horton?

Sig: He’s the host of a radio show called “The White Horse Inn,” reformation theology.

Don: Yes. Absolutely. A very good program. But he says this. “If we do not see sanctification as a necessary and inevitable outcome of justification, we will become at least theoretical antinomians,” that is, people who are against law in every sense of the word. “If we do not see justification as the fountain of sanctification, we will become legalists.”

The legalist’s favorite hymn is “O, How Love I Thy Law.” Now there is nothing wrong with loving the law of God. What did David say? Blessed is the man who “meditates on God’s law day and night.” Jesus said, “Till heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or one tittle shall pass from the Law, till all is accomplished.” Paul says, “Do we nullify the law by this faith? No, we establish the law.” But what happens? These people pervert it. They worship the law. They believe that obeying the law is a way to be justified, and, of course, the legalists add all kinds of manmade rules. Don’t smoke, don’t drink, don’t chew. Don’t go with girls that do. (*Laughter.*)

On the other hand, there are the antinomians, the “easy believe” people of our day, that just say, “Well, I come to Christ, and I can just live any old way I want to.” Ted, and I believe Bill McCoy also, told me of an incident in Ted’s Sunday school class. As Ted was talking about grace, somebody came up and said, “Oh, well great! I can live any way I want!” And Ted said, “Well, if you think that way, chances are you’re probably not saved.”

The favorite hymn of the antinomians is the parody of the hymn:

“Free from the law! O blessed condition!

Jesus has bled, and there is remission.”

Their version is:

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Free from the law! O blessed condition!

I can sin as I please, and still have remission.

Well, what does Jesus have to say about that? It’s one of the most frightening, if not the most frightening passage of Scripture. Don Bishop, would you read Matthew 7:21-23, please?

Don: “Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord!” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. On that day, many will say to me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and do many mighty works in Your name?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.”

Don: Yes. These are people who claim to love Christ, and make a false profession, and Jesus says that they may have called Him “Lord, Lord!”--a term of intimacy--but “I never knew you.” He doesn’t say, “I knew you for fifteen minutes,” or whatever. He only knew the “good thief,” the thief on the cross, for three hours, if that. “I never knew you.” Not only were you trusting in all of your works, but you lived lives of hypocrisy, lawlessness, a false profession. Okay, since we’re on bishops, how about Bishop Rodgers. I assume you’re here.

Bishop Rodgers: I am.

Don: Okay. Would you read for us James 2:26?

Bishop Rodgers: “So, as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead.”

Don: James, the book that gave our friend Martin Luther so much trouble, at least early in his ministry, but, you know, it makes perfect sense. *(Transcriber’s Note: I meant that James’ statement that faith without works is dead, not that Luther’s trouble with the book of James made sense.)*

And, of course, 1 John 2:4. “He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” I’m not talking about perfection, but certainly the desire, and that’s what God plants in us.

So there is living, saving faith. Remember the three elements of faith—knowledge, assent, and trust. And the Westminster Confession--you have it there--says it very well. This is what faith is.

“Faith, thus receiving and resting upon Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification, yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever

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accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but works by love,” as Galatians 5:5-6 says. Sig, would you read that for us, please?

Sig: For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.”

Don: Faith working through love. Let’s use the analogy of marriage. I’m playing for a friend’s daughter’s wedding today. What if the groom says, “Well, honey, I love you, and I’ve married you, and now we’re one. We’re together for better or worse. So I’m going to make your life as miserable as I can! I’m just going to make you so mad, and do what you don’t like, and irritate you.” Come on! There are people who do that in a Genesis 3 world, unfortunately. But, no! “I want to love you. I want to do what pleases you. I want to make you happy.” Well, if you love Christ, what are you going to do? You are going to want to do what pleases Him. We never do it perfectly, and that’s what I want to talk about next.

Practical righteousness is the result of the working of the Holy Spirit within us, and we actively pursue it. You have the term “holy schizophrenia” there. That’s not a phrase I came up with. I don’t know if he’s here, but Jared, one of our pastors, came up with that phrase, and I like it. I really do. If you are here, Jared, would you read 1 Corinthians 15:10?

Jared: “But by the graced of God I am what I am. And His grace toward me was not in vain. But I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which is within me.”

Don: Okay. And Jared, would you read Philippians 2:12-13, please?

Jared: Yes. “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to do His good pleasure.”

Don: At the risk of working you too hard, would you read our next Scripture, since it all goes together, Ephesians 2:10?

Jared: “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Don: Okay. Do you see the beautiful logic of these Scriptures? It’s not “work out your salvation, because God’s not going to do it for you; you have to do it yourself.” Absolutely not! God is working within you to will and to do His good pleasure. There are works He has created for you from the foundation of the world. So when you resist temptation to sin, or when you feel the urge to call a brother who you know is in distress to pray with him, or when you really want to love someone and help someone, or to

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spend extra time in prayer with your Lord, those are things that God is working in you. So it's not that you do it, because God isn't. No, He is! But, on the other hand, it's not that you don't have to do anything. Let go, and let God. God is doing it all, and so you just coast, relax, and don't do anything. No, no. It's a beautiful, beautiful logic, and we actively pursue it, we really do. It's a very, very good thing.

Now what does this practical righteousness look like? What is the evidence of this practical righteousness? What does God produce in us?

Participant: Hey, Don?

Don: Yes, Sig?

Sig: Can I ask you a question?

Don: Fire away.

Sig: On the first part, before you go into your next section on the evidence there, isn't the grace of God sufficient to cover even the scoundrel that you've portrayed in your comments, where he says to his bride, "I'm going to treat you terribly. I know the grace of God, so I can get away with everything?" Doesn't His grace cover a scoundrel? You know, I screw up a lot.

Don: Don't we all?

Sig: Yes, but you made it sound like if I screw up, even if I do it intentionally, I'm cut out.

Don: No. I'm exaggerating, okay? I mean, if you don't have the evidence, and if God hasn't implanted a desire, and you have a cavalier, casual attitude, (and I'm going to talk about this in a few minutes when I talk about repentance), you're right. All of us sin intentionally. But God will see to it that we don't stay there. We may stay there for long periods of time. Not that it's inspired, but even the Westminster Confession, (and I believe it's getting it's cues from Scripture), says that "the flesh may much prevail for a time." But the Holy Spirit will see to it--and a lot of times He does it through discipline, chastisement, suffering, whatever--to bring us back on that straight and narrow path. And the person who says, "Well, I don't care. I'm just going to sin, and sin, and sin, and sin," with no repentance, well, I don't know. But that's not what I'm talking about. All of us struggle with sin, and as I said before, I'm glad Romans 7 is there. Heaven help us if it weren't! Does that help?

Sig: Yes.

Don: Okay, good.

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Participant: Don?

Don: Yes?

Participant: I also want to say that this sounds like this is really the fruit that’s being produced in us.

Don: Yes, the fruit of the Spirit. It is definitely the fruit that is being produced in us. I don’t believe that we’re passive. We actively pursue these things, because of the work of Christ in us. I think we’ll understand this a little bit better when we get into this evidence.

And the first one is very foundational—repentance, hatred of sin. This was the first message that Jesus taught, His first public message. Bishop Rodgers, Matthew 4:17, please?

Bishop Rodgers: Matthew 4:17. “From that time, Jesus began to preach, and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.”

Don: Yes. Another place where He says it is a lot more graphic. In Luke 13, verse 5, He says, “Unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” Repentance is not an option.

It reminds me of the joke about the pastor, where the congregant goes to the pastor, and says, “Boy, your sermons are so negative! You spent the whole sermon talking about repent, or perish”

So, next Sunday, the pastor says, “I’d like to apologize to all of you. Last Sunday, someone came up to me and said that I was too negative, because I told you to repent or perish. That was my sermon. So I want to be more positive this week. You must positively repent, or you will positively perish.” (*Laughter.*)

Jesus didn’t mince words there, did He? It’s spoken about often in the New Testament. It’s the flip side of saving faith. It’s not an option. You know, I get very, very concerned, for example, when individuals, or denominations, such as what happened last week, live in or legalize sin, and say, for example, that so-called “gay marriage” is perfectly all right, or whatever. Of course, there are the more “acceptable sins” in our lives that we have to work on, like worry, or pride, or whatever.

Is our repentance perfect? No, never. But it has to be there. It’s a sign that God is working in us. And I like what the Westminster Confession, chapter 15, Section 2 says.

“By that a sinner, out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness” (the stench, in other words, it stinks to high heaven)—“of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God, and upon the apprehension of His mercy in Christ, to such as are penitent, so grieves for and hates his sins, as to turn

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from them all to God, and purposing and endeavoring to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments.” We don’t do it perfectly, but we do it daily. It’s not a one time thing’ it’s every day.

It’s a turning from our sin to God. The Greek word, I believe, is *metanoia*. The Confession also says that “we ought not to content ourselves with a general repentance, but it is every man’s duty to repent of his particular sins particularly.” And that’s painful! But afterwards, as Hebrews 12 says, “It yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

There is a difference between the accusations of Satan and the conviction of the Holy Spirit. The conviction of the Holy Spirit may be painful at first, but then it’s a blessed thing, isn’t it?

Next, God produces in us a love for His word. Jared, would you read 1 Peter 2:1-3, please?

Jared “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

Don: Okay. That’s a very interesting passage, and those of you who are or have been parents know this. What does a baby do when he wants his food? He craves for it. He screams! He cries with a shrill voice! This is what Peter is talking about when he speaks of our desire for the word of God. That’s how we should desire the word of God. Charles Spurgeon said that it should come to the point in our lives where our very blood is Biline, in other words, that the word of God should be in our bloodstream. We’re to desire the word of God.

It’s very distressing to me how many people profess to be Christians, and yet Biblical illiteracy is rampant, not only in our culture, where you would expect it to be, but in the church! People just don’t know the word of God. They don’t know the basics of salvation. When you have polls that talk about the fact that there are Christians who believe in reincarnation, there’s something wrong! It just doesn’t compute! Or, when there are Christians who believe that there are other ways of salvation besides Christ, yikes! Biblical illiteracy is rampant.

But not only that. We’re not to stay on milk, are we? We’re to mature in our growth in the word of God. The writer of Hebrews chided his hearers, because he said that they ought to be teachers by now, and yet they were still on milk! Paul said the same thing to the Corinthians. Grow up! We need to know not only the milk of the Word, but the meat of the Word, the prime rib of the Word, that which is hard to digest. Ted cited the Hebrews 4 passage, which says that “the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword. It pierces between soul and spirit, between joints and marrow.” Only the word of God can do that. That’s why we need to read it, and digest it.

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Participant: Don?

Don: Yes?

Participant: I think this is a good example here, in 1 Peter 2. He says, “Put away all deceit and hypocrisy.” Long for spiritual milk. But if you go back to what Paul has written to us in Philippians, it’s the Lord that works in us both to will and to do.

Don: Indeed!

Participant: So it’s all-encompassing.

Don: It is, yes. Only God could come up with a plan of salvation like that, right?

Participant: Yes.

Don: Indeed. And Tom, would you read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 for us?

Tom: Just a second here. What were those verses again?

Don: 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Tom: “All Scripture is breathed out by God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

Don: Okay. I think the ESV gets the idea. It gets it right. It’s breathed out by God, absolutely. And that passage is not just for pastors; it’s for all of us who want to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior. A love for the word of God.

Participant: Don?

Don: Yes?

Participant: Just one comment about the importance of Scripture. We also have to be careful who we’re taught by.

Another Participant: Yes.

Don: Oh, yes.

Participant: 2 Timothy 4:3 is one of the verses others have counseled us on. “For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.” And that’s what is happening in some denominations.

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Don: Oh, yes!

Participant: We have to be careful that we know the Bible well enough to know whether we’re hearing sound doctrine.

Don: Absolutely. We need to be very discerning. And Peter says the same thing, does he not, in his second epistle, when he calls the writings of Paul Scripture, and says that people twist those, like they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. Scripture can be twisted. So we have to be very, very careful who we’re taught by.

Next, God gives us a desire for private prayer. Bill McCoy, would you read Psalm 41:1-2 for us, please?

Bill: “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?”

Don: Wow! What a psalm! That should be the desire of our hearts as well. We’re all familiar with what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, that when we pray, we are to go into our room and shut the door, and pray to our Father who is in secret. Charles Spurgeon called prayer a graceometer, in other words, it is a barometer of how our spiritual lives are doing. J. C. Ryle says that prayer is necessary for a person to be a Christian. You may not be able to read God’s word, but the first thing that a Christian does is to pray, to cry out to God for repentance and salvation, and then to pray a lot.

So how do you do it? Well, my advice is, for what it’s worth, whatever works for you. We’re to “pray without ceasing,” as it says in 1 Thessalonians 5, to have our minds constantly on God. Luther said that he spent two hours in prayer in the morning, and more,--not less, but more,--if he was really busy. John Wesley said that if a person hasn’t spent three or four hours in prayer, he hasn’t prayed. Now, I think that’s a little bit much. (*Laughter.*) Nevertheless, the devotion of these men is very admirable. Some people use the model of “acts,”--adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication--for a model for prayer. The Lord’s Prayer, or, as Bruce calls it, the disciple’s prayer is also a very good model. I use that in my prayer life. And if it’s very difficult, as it is for many of us to pray, and we need help, the Psalms are a tremendous help to aid us in our prayers, Psalm 51, for example, a prayer of repentance. So are all the prayers of Scripture, such as Daniel 9 for repentance, or meditating on the precious promises of God and thanking God for those. All of those are a great help in our prayer lives. God gives us a desire to pray.

Another fruit that God produces in us is love of the brethren, the body of Christ, the church. Bishop Rodgers, John 13:34, please?

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Bishop Rodgers: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this, all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Don: Yes. Notice what He doesn’t say. All will know that you’re my disciples if you can spout off Scripture. All will know that you are My disciples if you can teach doctrine. Ouch! No, He says, “All will know you are My disciples if you have love for one another.” In the first century, even the pagans had this to say about the Christians. “Behold, how they love one another.”

And you can’t do that if you’re not part of the body. You know, it distresses me greatly when I hear people who claim to be Christians say, “Well, I love Jesus, but I have no use for the church.” There’s even a video on Youtube that has that kind of theme. But what if I came to you guys and said, “Well, I really like you, but I don’t like your wives.” I don’t think you’d appreciate that very much, would you? But that’s exactly what we’re saying when we say, “Well, I love Jesus, but I don’t have any use for the church.” “The church is full of hypocrites,” people say. Well, R. C. Sproul says, “There’s always room for one more.” (*Laughter.*) We’re all hypocrites in some way. We’re all sinners. Come and join the club, and rejoice! Christ “loved the church, and gave His life for it.” He shed His own blood for the church.

Participant: Don?

Don: Yes?

Participant: Don’t you think that gives us an interesting insight into the power of sin, that Jesus would tell His disciples, (*paraphrase*): “I’m going to give you a third commandment here. You love one another,” because He knows that on their own, they’re not going to do that.

Don: Oh, yeah!

Participant: It’s only His Spirit that will produce that.

Don: Absolutely. Good point, Tom. And Christ identifies so very much with His bride, His body, that to do harm or good to a Christian is to do harm or good to Christ. What does He say to Saul, who became the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus? Not “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting My people?”, but “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” On the day of judgment, the evidence that Christ was working in us is what? “I was hungry, and you gave Me food. I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink. I was sick and you visited me, naked and you clothed Me,” etc. This isn’t talking about general charity here. This isn’t talking about the social gospel. This is talking about Christians who gave their lives to other believers.

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And we know, all of us know, just from this microcosm of the church, the Brave Men of Friday Morning, what a great and special bond the love of the brotherhood is! We know that. And you don't have to know someone for five minutes. You can sense that this person is truly a brother. I was talking to a friend of mine. We went to breakfast a few weeks ago, a number of us from my church, and also Jay Batch, who is not here today, and Dick Clauser. And my friend Karl was saying that later that day, he went to a neighbor's graduation party. It was nice. All the people were nice, but he said it was nothing like we experienced at that breakfast. And even though he had never met Jay or Dick before, he instantly knew that bond, that fellowship. It's great! There is nothing like it in all the world!

And not only that. In the church, we have the means of grace. I've already talked about some of those. But we have worship, corporate worship. There is no place I would rather be on Sunday mornings than with my church, you know? It's a wonderful thing. The sacraments, as Ted talked about last week, and preaching, and fellowship. Fellowship isn't just getting together and talking about the Steelers, or the Pirates, or whatever. It's talking about the things of God. What has God done in your life?

Last Saturday I was at a Bible study that Jay Batch had invited me to. Dick was also there. Dick goes everywhere! (*Laughter.*) I'll tell you what, he's great! He just can't get away from me, and vice versa. But anyway, it was great! I mean, we shared the things of the Lord. People were reading Scripture, and then, all of a sudden, one of our brothers there just burst into song. It was half white, half black. It was tremendous! Absolutely tremendous! That's the fellowship of the body. That's the church, and you can't experience that if you're not part of it. The arm doesn't say, "I don't need you." The eye doesn't say, "I don't need you." The whole body has to work together.

Participant: Don?

Don: Yes?

Participant: Excuse me. I don't want to get off on a big tangent here, but when it talks about loving one another, when it talks about Christ will know His disciples who love one another, so how do we love one another? Now Christ said there is no greater love than this, that you lay down your life for another, and I get this idea that, okay, in my sin nature, I want to serve myself. Now, in order to love somebody else, I need to serve him, and I can't do that without Christ in my heart. So really, when I lay down my life, my life is my actions. So when somebody calls, and he's in need of something, do I do what I want to do, or do I put that aside, lay my life down basically, and go help somebody, whatever his need is? So I don't want to go on a big tangent there, but when it talks about loving one another, you know, how do we do that?

Don: Well, that's right, and we could spend weeks and weeks on that, and Bruce, I believe, has done that with the 28 "one another" commands in Scripture. But, I mean, it's

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all encompassing, isn't it? It's absolutely all encompassing. And, like I said before, the Holy Spirit is working in you when you feel the need to call a brother, because you sense that something is wrong, or to pray. Last night, Jay Batch called, and prayed for me about today. I thought that was really, really kind of him. Or whatever you do, if you see a brother in distress, and helping him in whatever way you can, that is manifesting the love of Christ.

Participant: Don?

Don: Yes?

Participant: Just one comment. It's significant in this text that Jesus offers Himself as the definition of what we're talking about.

Don: Indeed! Oh, yes! “Greater love has no man than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”

And then, finally, there is love for neighbors, unbelievers, even enemies. If you want to see the difference between Christianity and Islam, that's it, right? The Great Commission results in a desire to share Christ with that unbelieving friend, neighbor, or enemy. We know the Great Commission. “Go into all the world, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you.” It's a supernatural thing. All of this is supernatural. None of this is just being a nice guy. We know people whose personalities are naturally very nice, but this is something quite different, totally of the Spirit, totally supernatural.

And now I would like to conclude with these observations. This may shock some of you; it is shocking to me. God is pleased with, and graciously rewards, our righteous service. Jared, would you read Hebrews 13:16, please?

Jared: “But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

Don: How can that be? How can that possibly be? We've already said this morning that our best works are tainted with sin. We're snow covered dung! Though Christ loves us, our faith and our works don't “smell too good” sometimes. So how in the world can our practical righteousness be pleasing to God, when it falls so far short, and is so tainted with weakness and sin and imperfection? Well, it's in those three little words that Bruce has been talking about for a year and a half--union with Christ.

Westminster 18, section 6, says this. After going through just about a whole chapter of how our works fall so far short, where Jesus says that after you've done all, say, “We are unprofitable servants; we've only done our duty.” (We haven't done all.) But the Confession says this: “Nevertheless, He,” (that is, God the Father), “looking upon them,”

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(that is, our good works), “in His Son, is pleased to accept and to reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.” I wouldn’t believe it if it weren’t there in Scripture. They are rewards of grace, as Augustine said. They’re not meritorious at all; they are gracious rewards, but they are rewards nonetheless. Sig, would you read Matthew 10:39-42, please?

Sig: “Whoever receives you receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water, because he is a disciple, truly I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

Don: Can you believe that? Oh, my goodness, these are the words of Jesus, and all through the Scripture we have that. For example, for those who are persecuted, suffering for the sake of Christ, what did He say? Forgive me, but I love the way John Gerstner says this. (*Imitation of John Gerstner’s gravel voice:* “Great is your reward in heaven! Great is your reward in heaven!” Oh, wow! I just love it! But all throughout Scripture we have that. Work so that you don’t lose your reward. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3 that there will be those who are saved, as it were, by the skin of their teeth, and they will suffer loss, but they will still be saved. Rewards are a great thing.

How will that work out in glory? I don’t know. Will there be a greater capacity for joy, or whatever? At the same time, nobody will be envious of the rewards that others have.

Jesus talks about the parable of the workers. They come in at nine o’clock, twelve, three and five o’clock, from nine o’clock in the morning till five o’clock at night. And those who work at five o’clock in the evening and just work a little bit receive the same as those who come at nine o’clock in the morning, and they grumble. But Christ says, (*paraphrase*): “Hey, it’s my prerogative to give.” Yet there are rewards, too.

George Whitfield was asked one time if he believed that he would see John Wesley in heaven, because Whitfield was a staunch Calvinistic predestinarian, and Wesley fought it with tooth and nail. And it’s very interesting what George Whitfield said. He said, “No, I don’t believe I will see Wesley in heaven.” But then he said this: “because he is going to be so much more sanctified, and he is going to be so much closer to the throne of grace than I am.”

That’s very interesting. Whatever it is though, we will all be equally happy, all swimming in the ocean of God’s love, as Jonathan Edwards puts it. But there will be degrees of blessedness, so we have to keep that in mind.

And therefore, we are not to be lazy or sluggish, but to abound in the work of the Lord. It’s like that commercial. I say that I don’t watch much TV, but I quote all these

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commercials! Interesting! (*Laughter.*) There’s that new one about exercise that says, “Go, you chicken fat, go!” (*sung.*) (*Laughter*) Be busy in the work of the Lord! Tom Hansz, would you read Hebrews 6:11-12?

Tom: “And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope, until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Don: Amen. And, of course, we know what Galatians 6 says, that if we do not grow weary in well doing, we shall reap the harvest. And then, finally, Jared, 1 Corinthians 15:58.

Jared: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

Don: Amen. Sometimes we get discouraged, don’t we? But brothers, believe me, Jesus knows it all, and notices it all, and will reward it. I just think of one of the most sublime passages of Scripture, where Jesus says, “Don’t lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume, and thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” Oh, we’re so preoccupied with stuff, stuff, stuff, more, more, more. Jesus said, “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, money bags that do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens.” That’s what we’re living for. That’s what we want.

And by the grace of God working in us, by the Holy Spirit working in us, we will have holiness. We will serve a holy God. We have the imputed righteousness of Christ. God implants the righteousness of God in us, and we will have identifiable, practical righteousness. Amen?

Men: Amen!

Don: Let us pray. Our Father and our God, we thank You so much for Your holy word. And we thank You, Lord, for this instruction. I pray that Your sinful servant here, who has given this Word, Lord, that we would meditate on these things, and that, Lord, we would just be busy and joyful in the work of Your kingdom, whatever our occupations, whatever our calling in life, whatever You have called us to do. May we do it for Your glory. And we pray all of these things in the name of Jesus. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen!”