

THE LIFESTYLE OF THE SAVED: PART II

HOLINESS

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August 8, 2014

Bruce: Father, we thank you that, in the pain of life, there is hope in Christ. In the difficulties of our existence, there is peace, because we have access to the heavenly Father, because we've been justified by faith alone. Father, we pray that you would continue to open our eyes this morning, that we might behold You more gloriously, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Turn in your Bibles, please, to the book of 1 Peter. We'll be looking at verses 13, 14 and 15 today. The overall theme of this particular passage is what I'm calling "*Family Resemblance*." Peter has taught us, in the first twelve verses, about our glorious and gracious salvation, in the Person and work of Christ. As a result of that, we take on a certain resemblance of the family lineage that we have as believers.

Now we've got a great example of that right in our midst. Doug, I don't mean to embarrass you, but would you and your sons stand up for a moment? Doug Mangus and his boys—now just take a look at that! You can tell that they all belong to the Mangus family, can't you? (*Laughter.*) Their lineage is really obvious. Thank you, guys. (Applause.)

Well, that's what Peter is teaching us. Peter is teaching us that there is a family resemblance to the family of God when people really understand their gracious and glorious salvation by grace in the Person and work of Christ. When you understand that, you begin to take on a certain family resemblance. Now that is not a physical resemblance, but it is a spiritual resemblance, that you are identifiable as one of God's children because of the resemblance you have with other family members. And Peter is describing for us that resemblance in these verses. So let me read 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 13, 14 and 15. Here is the resemblance that we all have, when we understand our gracious and glorious salvation.

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action. Be sober-minded. Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance. But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct."

Now he's describing our family resemblance. Now there is even a family resemblance in some children who have been adopted. Now they may not take on a physical family resemblance, but they will take on a resemblance based on attitudes, some conduct, some actions, and in the way that they think, because they have been raised in a certain family. There's a family resemblance. And that's the theme of Peter's teaching in this particular passage. You and I take on a certain resemblance that is identifiable to us as followers of Christ. And so I've entitled this particular passage "*The Lifestyle of the Saved*." We take on a resemblance, and our lifestyle is very similar to in our conduct, in our attitudes, and in our thinking.

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Peter has been teaching us that our lifestyle reveals our lineage. Last week, we talked about how we think, and the mindset of the saved. If you recall, last week we talked about a prepared mind, a self-controlled mind, and a hopeful mind. That becomes the new pattern of our thinking.

And our thinking patterns determine our behavior patterns. That's why Peter says, in verse 13, "Prepare your minds for action. And being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace to be given you at the revelation of Christ." In other words, the way that you think determines the way that you act. We've talked about that. That's the little card that we hand out to you. Think, act and feel correctly. When you think right, you're going to act right. Peter has been telling us to set your minds for action. Be ready to move. Be sober-minded, and set your hope that is given to us in the Person and work of Christ.

Now today's portion of our passage is this. How we act is based upon how we think. Prepare your mind; be ready for action. Be sober-minded, and be holy. That's taking on our family resemblance.

Now holiness is our style of life. But there is a bridge between our holiness and our thinking, and that is hope. Hope and holiness are closely associated in the Scripture, and must not be separated. When you have hope, as we had a clear example by Sig and his illustration with Frank, when there is hope, you have holiness. There is a correlation between the hope that we have in the Person and work of Christ and the holiness in our style of life, our family resemblance.

Take a look at 1 John chapter 3, verse 3. John says, "And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as He is pure." In other words, when you have hope in the grace that is to be revealed in the Person and work of Christ, you begin to take on a certain style of action that demonstrates your life as a holy person.

Now we need to understand that this mindset produces a pattern of life. And today, we want to take a look at the motive behind our mindset, and the mark of our motive.

So today, the motive is found in verses 14 and 15. "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct."

Now I'm going to give you a lot of cross references today, so I would encourage you to take notes, because this is going to be important for us to understand. The way that we think determines the way that we act, and the way that we act gives away our family resemblance.

So, notice. What is the motive in verses 13, 14 and 15? The motive is love. It's a love response. "As obedient children" is a love response. Children and obedience go together, just as hope and holiness go together.

Now notice verses two and three of chapter one of 1 Peter. Look at verses 1 and 2. "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect, exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience."

Now the whole reason for our salvation is obedience. We have been saved to be obedient. And just as hope and holiness go together, love and obedience go together.

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The constitution and character of a child of God is impressed upon us at our rebirth. That becomes our nature.

Now the title “children” is used to describe two kinds of people in the Scripture. It’s used in the Bible to describe both the believer and the unbeliever. Let me give you some examples.

For believers, you’ll see that “the children of God” is a nomenclature that is given to us, “children of promise,” “Abraham’s children,” “children of light.” Those are descriptions of the word “children,” describing a follower of Christ.

It also describes unbelievers. Here is how the Scripture describes unbelievers, using the theme of being a child, because there is a correlation between obedience and children. The Scripture describes the unbelievers as “children of wrath.” The Scripture describes unbelievers as “sons of disobedience,” and “children of the curse.”

Both times the word “children” is used. But the important thing to realize is the obedience to which nature determines the lineage of your heritage. In other words, if you’re a nonbeliever, you’re going to have a certain style of life that’s going to reveal that lineage. And therefore, you’re a child of the curse. You’re a child of disobedience. You’re a child of wrath. And, conversely, if you have a new nature, because of your rebirth, you’re going to have a different lineage that you’re going to give away, and that is one of holiness. And therefore, you would be “children of God,” “the children of the promise,” “Abraham’s children,” and “children of light.”

Obedience of each title refers to the obedience of the gospel, or disobedience of the gospel, and not just to morality from the gospel. Now take a look at some verses, to help you to understand this.

Look at Romans chapter 10, verse 16. I want to share the importance of love as an assurance for our obedience. Let’s back up to verse 14. “How, then, will they call on Him of whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”,”

But notice this. “But they have not all obeyed the gospel.” You see, the gospel is an act of obedience, not a matter of preference. It’s an act of obedience. “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what we have heard?”,” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

So we need to understand that when we talk about love and obedience, there is a correlation to the response to the gospel. How about 2 Thessalonians 1:8? “... in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus.” You see, you’re going to see a correlation, brothers, between the gospel message and obedience. To us, the response to the call of the gospel is an act of obedience, because it’s a love response because of our new nature, which reveals our family heritage.

How about John 6:29? “The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent.” You see, friends, the gospel is not a matter of preference, or a matter of choice. It’s an act of obedience. And when we do not obey the command of the gospel, God takes that

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seriously. That's why He reacts so vehemently to those who disagree with the gospel and disobey the gospel, because it's an act of disobedience.

That is how our love response to God for our glorious and gracious salvation really affects the way that we live. It's a loving duty. Look at 14b of 1 Peter chapter 1. Back to 1 Peter. "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance." Now why is it that you and I are obedient? It's because of our love response.

Look at John chapter 14, verses 15 and 21. Jesus says this. "If you love Me, you will obey what I command." You see, brothers, obedience is a love response. Yes, it's a duty, but the nature of it is a love response.

How about John 14:21? "Whoever has My commands, and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me." Now notice this. Obedience is not legislated; it is a love response. Obedience is our duty, but love is our motive. What is the motive for obedience? It's a love response, in obedience. (*Paraphrase*.) "If you love Me, you'll obey." There's a correlation. Yes, it is a duty, but the motive of our obedience is a love response to Christ, because we understand this, our gracious and glorious salvation.

Now what Peter is saying, in verse 14, is, (*paraphrase*), don't be conformed to what you used to do. Let's take an example. Sometimes, when you're discouraged, you have to think about what I used to be like, and what I am now. What did I used to be like, and what am I now?

Let's take a look at some verses. How about Ephesians chapter two? Go to Ephesians chapter two. I want to show you the contrast of who we are now, as Peter is telling us, which is our family resemblance, and that which we used to be. And sometimes it's very helpful just to think back upon your life, and say, "You know, I used to do this, but I don't do that anymore. I used to think this way, but I don't think that anymore." That's the contrast, Peter is telling us, between understanding your gracious and glorious salvation, between the way you used to act, and the new nature now, which reveals your family resemblance.

So how about Ephesians chapter 2, verses 2-6? Let me start with verse 1. "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived, in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." That's what we used to be.

But we are not anymore, because of our gracious and glorious salvation. There's a contrast. How about 1 Peter chapter four? Peter refers to this several different times—the contrast between what we used to do and what we are now doing because of our family lineage. 1 Peter chapter 4, verses 1-3. "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking. For whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions, but for the will of God."

Now what he is saying here folks is, Look! This is what you used to be. But you don't have to live like that anymore, because of the new nature that you have in the Person and work of Christ. When you were regenerated, God gave you a heart that was sensitive to

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spiritual things, which you did not have before. Before that, you were a child of wrath. Now you've been saved from the wrath of God to come. Now, you're a child of God, and you take on a new lineage. And so you prepare your mind, you think correctly, you're sober-minded, and you have hope. And that is what leads you to have a different style of conduct, because now you understand that You and I have been called to be obedient to the gospel call. And my obedience is a love response, because every time you're obedient, you're basically saying to the Lord, "I love You."

Now let me have a little bit of license here, as I give you an example. Let's say you're struggling with something in your life. And you realize this: that you need to be obedient. And so you trust the Holy Spirit to give you the grace to be obedient at that moment. And here's what's happening in heaven. Give me a little license here, now. The Son says to the Father, "He just demonstrated his love for Us because of his obedience. What he was telling Us is that he loves Us." You see, obedience is the means by which you show God that you love Him, but the motive of obedience is a love response. So we've been saved, as Peter told us, for obedience, but the motivation for that is a love response. Yes, it is a duty, but the motive is love. Do you understand that? It's a love response in obedience. That's what Peter is saying, and those people who have a love response in obedience take on the family lineage, just like Doug and his sons. Yes, Don?

Don: Yes. I don't think that you're too far afield at all, Bruce, because Jesus said that there is rejoicing among the angels in heaven over one sinner who repents.

Bruce: Amen with that. My point is this, guys. It pleases the Lord when you and I demonstrate our love for Him. And how do we do that? We do that by our—

Participant: Obedience.

Bruce: Obedience. It's a love response.

How about one other. How about Colossians chapter 3, verses 5-10? Now all I'm trying to point out, brothers, is what we used to be, and what we are now. "Put to death therefore, what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of all these, the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them." But you don't do that anymore, because of the gracious and glorious salvation that Peter taught us about.

"But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices, and put on the new self, which is now being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator." You've taken on your family resemblance.

Peter is teaching us that, when you have the right mindset, you're self-controlled, you're ready for action, you have hope in the Person and work of Christ, and that leads you to have a love response, in obedience, and you take on your family resemblance, and you live as a saved person does.

Now we're not talking about perfection. Please understand that we're not talking about perfection. Perfection comes in the Person and work of Christ. When you are justified by faith, you get credit for His sinless perfection and perfect obedience.

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Holiness is not something that you achieve. Holiness is part of your nature. It's part of your nature, and that is what determines a love response. You don't achieve holiness. You don't work at holiness. It's something that God gives you in His grace, and as a result of that, you express your holiness. That's who we are now. God tells us that we are sinlessly perfect and perfectly obedient, and that we're justified by faith. That's how He views us. What you and I do is, we express that as a love motivation in obedience, and that is what determines our family resemblance. There ought to be a resemblance in all of us in our conduct that is very, very similar, because of our unified family heritage.

Now it seems to me that it would be monstrous for a child of God to turn back to the old way of life. Yes, Bill?

Bill: The concept of what you just put out there, that holiness is not something you achieve, but it's your nature, is so contrary to human nature. All of men's religions are based on performance infused. And, even within various aspects of Christendom, you'll still see those people who are trying to (*unclear*) in place of performance or achievement, whether it's the Holiness Movement that blessed the church years ago, or various aspects of legalism you see today. But the issue is, what we're dealing with, is something uniquely of Christ, something uniquely different than what man can comprehend. It's part of the whole aspect that God is incomprehensible, and that's why we struggle with this, which is what you're talking about today, the nature of holiness.

Bruce: Good illustration. Do you understand what Bill is saying? Again, holiness is not something that you achieve. It's not something you perform to do. It's part of your nature! That's what gives us our family resemblance! Just as Doug and his sons look alike, you and I look alike because of one thing. God's holiness is implanted in us at our regeneration. You now have a whole new nature. And what Peter is saying in the examples of the verses I just gave you is (*paraphrase*), "Don't go back and live like you used to." You don't have to do that anymore, because you now have a new nature. You can only live out the nature that you have. That's why the sinner cannot do anything to please God, because his nature does not conduce it to that. Now you have a new nature, because of the glorious and gracious salvation. Do you follow that? Holiness is not something you achieve. It's part of your nature! Express it by the way that you live. And the motivation to do that is obedience. And the motivation behind that is a love response. "If you love Me, you will obey My commands."

True salvation always leads to obedience, and results in obedience. Now not perfection; we're not talking about perfection. Perfection comes through the Person and work of Christ.

Last wee, we talked about living life in moderation, and my brother came up to me afterwards with a great insight. He said, "You know, the things that I'm finding out, the way that I manage my life in moderation, is that I don't let anything gain mastery over me."

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Let me take you to 1 Corinthians 6:10-12. Remember, we talked about this, Paul's instructions on how to make decisions. That was a very good comment after our class last week.

Now Paul gives us three instructions on decision making. He says this, first of all. "All things are lawful for me." "But not all things are helpful."

Now the word "helpful" there means cooperative, or beneficial, or productive. In other words, you've got a lot of freedom in Christ to do certain things. But not all the choices you make are going to be helpful, or productive, or cooperating in what God is doing in your life. That's where your obedience comes in. Yes, I can go read this magazine. I can go to this movie. I can listen to that show, and watch that television program. But I'm not going to, because it may stimulate things within me that I know are not going to be conducive to my family lineage. So therefore, I say, "Thanks, but no thanks." I have the freedom, but I'm not going to do it. That's a love response, in obedience.

Now look at the next admonition he gives us. This is the one my brother pointed me to. "All things are lawful for me." "But I will not be mastered by anything." You have a lot of freedom to do a lot of things. You have the freedom to pursue a career. But, Paul says, (paraphrase), "Don't let it master you," or you will not manage your life in moderation. You have the freedom to play golf, to fly fish, to do whatever you want to do. But you've got to make sure that those things don't gain mastery over you. And the way that you and I understand how we moderate our lives is not to let anything master us, except the Person and work of Christ. That is how we take on our family lineage.

So why do I refer to this as "loving duty?" Well, look at John 14:15 and 21 again. I come back to the central theme of this, obedience as a love response. So when you and I are obedient, we're expressing our love response to God.

Now, prior to our salvation, we were imitators of the world. But now, because of our new nature, we respond in obedience, and we become imitators of God. Look at Ephesians 5:1 and 2.

Are you following this? I'm not all over the place, am I? (*Laughter.*)

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: Does it make sense?

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: Am I teaching to the point of understanding? I know I'm giving you a lot of Scripture, but I'm trying to help you to understand this, that the theme of Peter about our taking on a family resemblance is the same concept that every other Biblical book

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teaches. There is a resemblance that you and I have, because of our new nature. And that reveals the fact that we are citizens of the kingdom, and that we are children of God.

So how about Ephesians chapter five? Now notice what Paul writes to the church at Ephesus. “Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children.” “Children” is our family lineage. “Beloved” is our motivation, and our response is to be imitators of God. We were imitators of the world prior to our conversion, and our gracious and glorious salvation. Now we are imitators of God.

Now that does not mean that we take on His sovereignty. That’s not what I’m talking about. We’re talking about the family lineage and the character qualities of God that can be revealed to us by the expression of our lives through obedience. So, as Paul says, (*paraphrase*), “I used to be an imitator of the world. But now I’m an imitator of God.”

And then he goes on. “Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Romans chapter 8, verses 28-30. It’s the whole process of our salvation, producing some degree of conformity. If you act based upon what you think, you’re going to have a conflict. If you respond based upon the character of God, imitating God, you’re going to have conformity. And the motivation,--yes, Don?

Don: Yes, Bruce. I was just thinking that it’s interesting, that in all those passages that you quoted, it refers to children.

Bruce: Correct.

Don: Not slaves.

Bruce: Correct.

Don: Not servants, though, in a sense, we are servants of Christ. But we’re children. And that makes all the difference in the world. I remember, whenever I was little, that I loved my father, but I also had a certain respect and fear of him. I knew that, if I disobeyed him, there would be consequences. But I wanted to obey him because I loved him, and that’s the same way with our relationship to Christ, to God. We’re His children, and we want to obey Him because we’re His children. We don’t come in terror of Him. We come in fear and awe. Peter even addresses that later. But we’re His children, who are to love Him, and that makes all the difference.

Bruce: That’s the correlation that Don is summarizing for us between hope and holiness, and love and obedience. It’s because we are His children. That’s why I wanted you to see that the Scripture uses the word “children” to describe two kinds of people—those who are in the family of God and those who are not. You are either a child of God or a child of wrath. Either are children, and that means you have an allegiance to that

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particular nature which you have. You take on the resemblance of the nature of what you're expressing by your conduct. We take on the common nature of being believers in Christ because we are His children. Yes, Dick?

Dick: Bruce, many of the things you're talking about here remind me of your preaching at Christ Church last fall on Daniel, and you said (*unclear*) you often get questions about who would be your favorite people in the bible. And you said, "The two people I want to meet when I get to heaven—I don't even know the names—but Daniel's mother and father." And it's sort of reminds me of the fact that, talking to me anyway,--

Bruce: Sure.

Dick: Of the family, and how we grow, and how important parents are in the lives of children.

Bruce: Absolutely. I would love to meet Daniel's parents, because he was a young teenage boy, somewhere between the ages of thirteen and fourteen years old. And look at his responses. Where did he learn that? He learned that in his home, from his parents. I can't wait to meet Daniel's folks, and just say, "What did you do to teach your son to have the response that he did?" You see, Daniel took on the family heritage and the family lineage of his parents. That's what we do with our families. That's why it's so important that we understand what Don just summarized, that we are God's children! That's how He views us. He views us as children. He is our loving Father. And we have a love response because we hold Him in great esteem, in great awe, in great reverence, and great love, because we want to please Him. That's what Jesus says. "If you really love Me." Your nature now is to really want to be obedient. That is the basis of the motivation for our taking on the family resemblance.

Now the conformity to our family resemblance is our obligation, not in the sense that we furnish the ability and the power—now get this!—we don't furnish the ability and the power to take on this resemblance. But as a result of God's call, which furnishes us the power and the ability, that comes from His grace. In other words, you now have the ability and the power to do that because of God's grace. It's not something that you achieve yourself. Holiness is not something you achieve. It is now part of your nature. Yes, Jay?

Jay: Don had mentioned the word "slaves," and slave is a word that I've meditated on, in just thinking how it has a negative connotation, but also, I have the New King James Version. And in Romans 6:18 and 19, it says, "having been set free from sin, you become slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness." I was just thinking about the word "slave," and thinking about God being our Master, and we are His slaves. It can be used in a positive sense.

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Bruce: Absolutely. “Slaves of righteousness,” Paul says, not slaves of unrighteousness. So that is taking on our family resemblance. You’re going to see this idea of family resemblance in all the epistles that Paul writes. We take on a family resemblance because of our nature.

Nowhere is one of the great Puritan thoughts that I’ve read recently. “This conformity to our family resemblance is our obligation, not in the sense that we furnish the ability and the power, but as a result of God’s call, which furnishes us the power and the ability.” Now here’s the statement. “The Hand that points us to holiness is the Hand that extends to us the grace to make us holy.” In other words, God is the source of holiness. That’s part of our nature. Yes, Tom?

Tom: Getting back to the family resemblance, you know, when I was born, I didn’t look like my dad. But I grew into manhood and started taking on that appearance. And, as you talk about obedience, I’m thinking that obedience, as it starts off in our sanctification, is a matter of our choice, that grows into nature. That’s when the power of the Holy Spirit takes us from “do I or don’t I?” to where it’s our new nature avoiding things.

Bruce: Now I want to, because of my new nature. Now, I don’t want to do that. That’s part of the struggle, isn’t it? Paul says, (*paraphrase*), “Why do I do the things I don’t want to do?” He understands the struggle. Guys, this is not an easy thing. This is not just a panacea, where you say, “Oh, I’m a child of God. Everything is going to be polyanaisish.” I’m not saying that at all. It’s a fight. That’s why Peter tells us that you’ve got to set your minds straight. Be ready for action. Have a prepared mind. Be self-controlled, and have hope. That’s our purpose and our position to have the motive to want to be obedient, because of a love response. So absolutely, it’s a function of our nature.

Now we need to understand this new nature. The word “called” is a very good word for us to understand.

Now notice chapter 1, verse 1 of 1 Peter again. Go back to our text. I want you to understand the word “called” for a minute, because the word “called” implies something to us. It implies this: that God is the source. That’s what the word “called” implies, that God is the source. You and I are not the source. God is the source because He has called us. Look at 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 15. “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.” Who is the source of our holiness? God is. And what is the reason for that? It’s because He has called you to be that. The Hand that motivates you to be obedient is the same Hand that is going to give you the grace to be obedient. That is part of our nature now, because of our union with Christ.

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How about 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 9? What a beautiful passage this is! “For you are a chosen race”—the word *called*—“you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellence of Him who *called* you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

Now how is it that you’re in light now? It’s because God is the source. Whenever you see the word “called,” don’t get hung up on the whole doctrine of election. What it basically means is this. God is now the source of what He is producing in your life. That’s what the word “called” means. “Called out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

How about chapter 2, verse 21 of 1 Peter? “For to this you have been *called*, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you might follow in His steps.” You take on the family resemblance.

Why is it that you and I take on the family resemblance? Because God has *called* us to do that, because He is the source of all of our motivation in our lives. In other words, we are called to suffer and follow Christ’s example of meekness, taking on the family lineage.

And how about chapter 3, verse 9 of 1 Peter? “Do not repay evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were *called*, that you may obtain a blessing.” Amidst persecution, we are called to inherit a blessing. Do you realize that? Now notice that. In the midst of your persecution, you are called to inherit a blessing. How is it that you and I inherit that blessing? It’s because we act out our new nature, and we don’t give them what they gave us. We don’t revile them just because they revile us. We don’t give them anger for anger.

Read that again. “Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, and a tender-hearted and humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but, on the contrary, bless. For to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.” That means this: “Blessed are those who are persecuted,” as Jesus taught us in the Beatitudes. Blessed are the persecuted. So, guys, if the Lord is pleased to take you through persecution, remember this, the end result of that. When you bless somebody who is persecuting you, you are receiving part of your inheritance.

Do you understand that? There is a great gift we have in being persecuted, because part of our family resemblance is how we respond to it. Don’t ask yourself the question, “Why am I being persecuted?” Remember Deuteronomy 29:29? (*Paraphrase.*) “The secret things belong to God, but the things that have been revealed are for us and for our children, so that we may obey the law.” In other words, there are a lot of secret things. When you’re persecuted, don’t ask why, because that’s a secret thing. You will never find out what God is doing *for* you in the secret things until you see what God is working *in* you in the revealed things. Now here is a revealed thing. Bless when you are persecuted, because you’ll inherit a blessing. Don’t ask the question “why?” Ask the question “How

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do I respond?” And then, in that response, you’ll find out the “why” of your persecution. And the end result will be this: you’ll receive a blessing. You’ll receive part of your inheritance. That’s part of our family lineage. And that becomes the result of our love response, and the desire to be obedient.

How about chapter 5, verse 10 of 1 Peter?

Participant: Hey, Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, please?

Participant: It’s kind of easy to talk about that, but when you’re in—

Bruce: Oh, absolutely it is.

Participant: It’s a—

Bruce: That’s what Paul says. This is a struggle. That’s why Peter reminds us that you’ve got to set your mind right. In other words, you’ve got to be prepared for action, men. Have a prepared mind. That’s verse 13. Be sober-minded, be self-controlled, and have hope. That is what allows you then to have a response that takes on our family resemblance. This is not an easy thing. It’s a fight. It’s a struggle.

Remember the three words that classify the body of Christ, all the way from Genesis to Revelation. These three words describe the church of Christ. The first word is *remnant*. It’s not everybody. The second word is *persecution*. If you desire to be holy in Christ Jesus, you will suffer persecution. And thirdly, *spiritual warfare*. That’s the history of the church. That’s where you and I have been called, because He gives us the resources of our lives, to demonstrate our family resemblance, in having a right response.

I know this is hard to take, but don’t ask yourself the question “Why am I suffering? Why am I persecuted?” Ask yourself the question, “What is it that I need to do in the midst of that?” That’s when you’re going to see what God is doing for you in the secret things.

Now here is how it works. You’ll never understand what God is doing *for* you, in the secret things of His will, until you see what He is working *in* you in the revealed things of His will. In other words, am I saved? Am I sanctified? Am I Spirit led? Am I submissive? Am I suffering? Am I saying “thanks?” You see, that is the revealed will of God, and when you understand what God is working *in* you in His revealed will, you’re going to understand what God is doing *for* you in the secret things.

And here is one of the secret things. Don’t revile. Don’t give anger for anger. In the midst of that, one of the secret things is that you’ll receive an inheritance. God will

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reveal that to us in time, because you will never understand what He is doing *for* you in the secret things until you see what He is doing *to* you and *in* you in the revealed things.

So ask yourself the question, “Am I in God’s will?” God’s will is not something you find out. God’s will is something you are found *in*. And when you are *in* His will, you will find *out* His will. We spend most of our time looking for the secret things. What job should I take? What college should I attend? Who should I marry? Should I leave the city of Pittsburgh and move to Tampa, Florida? Should I take this job or that job? Should I buy this house or that house? Those are all secret things. You’re not going to find in the Scripture, “Thou shalt go to Tampa.” (*Laughter.*) “Thou shalt work for Mellon.” (*Laughter.*)

You see, we spend too much of our time trying to find out the secret things. And the beauty of the Scripture is this: God has revealed things that you and I need to accentuate and work on. And those would be those six things we’ve talked about before. Do I have a saving relationship to the Father through Christ? Secondly, am I Spirit led? Am I being kept filled by letting the word of God dwell in me richly? Am I submissive? Am I sanctified? “This is the will of God for you, even your sanctification.” It’s revealed! No question. Your holiness is part of His revelation to us. Am I willing to suffer? Am I saying “thanks?” 1 Thessalonians 5:18: “Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.” It’s rather obvious! Be holy, and say “thanks.” If you can’t be holy, and say “thanks,” don’t take the job. (*Laughter.*) You’ll be out of His will.

I gave the illustration in my own life, years ago, when I came to Pittsburgh in 1988. I had two choices, to come back and take care of my family. My mother and father were showing signs of Alzheimer’s, and you don’t stop honoring your parents when they’re forty. So I came back and I realized that I needed to be the primary care giver of my parents in their remaining years because I came to saving faith through the ministry of my parents, just like Daniel’s folks. I wish you could have met my mother and father. Some of you know them a little bit, knew them in their latter years.

But I had two job opportunities. One was to work at the Pentagon, for the Department of the Navy, the Naval Aviation Program, and the other was to work at P.N.C. Now, being a Naval Academy grad, the epitome job for me was that one when I wanted to work with Naval Aviation at the Pentagon. Wow! Talk about a resume builder! That was it! I mean, that’s everything I could have wanted, humanly.

But I realized that God’s will is not the Pentagon, or P.N.C. The other option was for me to work at a bank. Now, my degrees are in engineering and theology, not finance and economics. So somebody said to me, the friend who introduced me to the job position at P.N.C., “Could you work at a bank?” And I thought, “Sure, I can balance a checkbook. I could work at a bank.”

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So here were my choices! Both of them were secret! Scripture doesn't say, "Thou shalt choose Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, or Washington, D.C." That is never the issue. The issue is what kind of a man am I going to be if I stay in Pittsburgh, and what kind of a man am I going to be if I go to D.C.? And so I went through those six revealed things of God's will.

Am I saved? Am I Spirit led? Am I sanctified? Am I submissive? Am I suffering? Am I saying "thanks?" That's His *revealed* will. I want to be *in* that. I can be in that in Pittsburgh just as much as I can be in that in D.C. The issue is not the location or the job. It's the condition of who I am in God's will. You're found in His will. I'm willing to be in His will. So, as I went through those six things, I came to this conclusion. I don't compromise very well. And I'm not the most flexible cat on the corner. I realized this: If I go to work at the Pentagon, it would be the epitome of the perfect job for me! Humanly speaking, it's the ideal position for me. But I know this. I'm going to have a tough time being holy and giving thanks. I have a better chance of being in God's will if I take the bank job than if I take the Pentagon job.

And some wonderful revelations have occurred, secret things! I'll tell you what, brothers! You are one of the secret things God had in store for me twenty-seven years ago. I never knew that! But I didn't discover that until I was found *in* His will, and then I began to realize what He was doing *for* me in His secret will. You guys happen to be one of those secret things that God had foreordained a long time ago. I just never knew it. I discovered that, because I saw what He was doing *in* me in the revealed things. I now can understand what He is doing *for* me in the secret things. Yes, Dale?

Dale: Recently, you just used the phrase from 2 Corinthians? Anyhow, it said, "race." The New King James says "generation." And I think the English Standard Version, which says "race," is correct, because a generation is limited to a particular generation.

Bruce: The generation has a time frame to it, thirty or forty years. "Race" is eternal; no termination point. That's a good point.

So my point is this, guys. And we'll summarize this. You've got to have the right mindset. Prepare your mind for action. Be sober-minded. Have the hope of the revelation of Jesus Christ, as He gives you the hope. Hope and holiness go together, just like love and obedience. Yes, wrap it up, Dick.

Dick: Just for all of us in this room, what you and Tom did, with that last bookmark, it tells that whole story about your tough decision, which really was a tough decision for you, after you went down through all the various facets.

Bruce: The revealed things. Now here's the summary, guys. Listen to this. You and I do not find out God's will. We're found in it. And when you're found in it, you'll find out what His will is. Don't look for the out. Make sure that you're in. And when you are

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in His will, you will never discover what God has done *for* you in the secret things of His will until you see what God is working *in* you in the revealed things of His will. That's when the clarity comes into vogue. That's because of our family resemblance. Our love response is an act of obedience, because we love the Father, who gave us such a gracious and glorious salvation. We'll pick this up next week.

Let's pray. Father, I just pray that, while this appears to me to be rather disjointed today, I trust that Your grace will override my inefficiency as a teacher. And Father, we just pray that You would be pleased to only let us remember these things that are consistent with Your revealed will. The secret things we need to let be secret, because we are trusting in You. Let us take on the family resemblance, because we all are motivated by a new nature, with a love response of obedience, for Your glory, and for the sake of Christ. And may it be so, for our family resemblance, and the race that we are, as children of the loving Father. May it be so for Your sake, in Jesus' name. And everybody said, "Amen!"

Participant: Excellent, Bruce! Thank you! (*Applause.*)