

## “THE RESPONSIBILITY TO BELIEVERS”

**HOLINESS**  
**TOM HANSZ**  
**1 Peter 2:4-10**  
**October 31, 2014**

**Sig:** You’re being recorded. Tom Hansz, ladies and gentlemen, or men and boys!  
(*Applause.*)

**Tom:** Good morning, brothers. Good to be here! I’ve missed you all. So let’s start and go before the Lord, and ask Him to be very active in our presence this morning. (*Lou Schreiber and Don Maurer play “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.”*)

Loving heavenly Father, You are so faithful! We just cannot imagine how great and faithful You are, not only to Yourself and Your Son and the Holy Spirit, but to us, whom you have brought into Your holy family. We thank You so much that You encourage us, You raise us, You correct us, You reprove us, You mold us into those men that You Yourself have planned for us to be. We thank You so much. We especially thank You for our teacher Bruce, and the time that He has to mend. We ask Your healing hand to be on Him. We ask Your grace to be over Him, that he can really take the next few days, and sense how much You love him, as You love us all. So be with us this morning. Give me words to encourage us, to teach us, and may all that we say and do here be to Your honor and glory. For we pray this in the precious name of Your Son, our Savior, the Author and finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Tom:** Well, I want to pick up where Bruce left off two weeks ago, about the structure and the function of the church, which is really God’s spiritual house. And one of the things that comes to mind in all this is what is our responsibility to God, as He is building His house? Bruce and I were talking, and saying, “Well, let’s take that idea and change it a bit. What is our responsibility to each other?” What are the members’ responsibilities to the body, and to one another? And so we’re going to look at that this morning.

And so, as we were thinking about responsibility, this one thought came up that I wanted to share with you from Daniel Webster. He says, “The most important thought that ever occupied my mind is that of my individual responsibility to God.” You know, we’re currently looking at things in the contemporary American church, and it’s always “What are the blessings I receive from God?” How many Christians today are actually saying, “What are my responsibilities to Him? What do I owe Him?”

As Bruce has said so often, people go to church to get a blessing. No, it’s to be a blessing. It’s to be used. So how is God going to use us? How do we open ourselves to Him, that He will use us?

So anyway, since we are a clergy, and Bruce was talking about a one-tier church,--(we don’t have clergy and laity; we’re all clergy)—so how does that form our responsibilities to each other?

So let’s go back and look at what 1 Peter has been telling us, reading through the second chapter, the fourth to the tenth verses. Peter is writing. “As you come to Him, a living stone, rejected by men, but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you

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yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious. And whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame. So the honor is for you who believe,. . . . But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” The word of the Lord.

**Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Tom:** It’s obvious that what Peter is doing is looking back at Isaiah and taking the verses out, and saying that Christ is our cornerstone! Christ is the foundation the church is built on, and Peter then says that we are living stones. Think about it. What God is building is not just a temple for worship, but a holy house. It’s a household that we are members of, and He resides in us, and we reside in Him.

And it’s interesting that, when you look at the idea of stones, as you go on further, in Isaiah 28, from where Peter just quoted, what I really get a kick out of is that God tells Isaiah that “I will make justice a line, and righteousness a plumb line, and hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter.”

So, as Christ is the cornerstone, justice is like the line, and God is like being a mason. And if you’ve ever watched a mason build something, it’s interesting that one of the most important tools they have is a simple line, a cord, and that keeps everything in line. Once you set the corner, then you take a straight line, and that starts the direction for building the wall, and as you go up, you take a plumb line at that corner, and that keeps everything straight.

God uses the same thing with us. His righteousness and justice will keep us in line with the cornerstone, so that as He is building up this shelter, this house, this building that will be to His glory, it’s just true, and it’s built correctly. And it’s by God, so you know it’s going to be perfect.

So we get to be these living stones, and, when you think about it, when you look at some of the more marvelous works of architecture that we have, stones are put in place, and they stay there, and they’re dead stones, but they’re perfect. It’s amazing! If you go back, and you look around Europe, where you have buildings which are five hundred, six hundred, or even a thousand years old, everything is done by hand. There is not a lot of power grinding, or anything. They all fit, and nothing is out of place.

In fact, to give you an idea of how neat mankind can be when they really try, when you look at the great pyramid of Cheops in Egypt, that was the largest of the three main pyramids they had there, at seven hundred and seventy feet on each side, a thousand feet across the diagonal. And when you look at the foundation, it has been recorded that, over that thousand feet, it’s off pure level by only half an inch.

**Men:** Wow!

**Tom:** How many buildings downtown that are maybe a hundred feet can be that level? (*Laughter.*) You know, it’s amazing! But here we have something that is even

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better, and more plumb, more level. It's the house that God is building. So, in spiritual terms, we can tell that things are going to be true, things are going to be right, and it's all done to His glory.

But he is also saying that the hail will come, and the waters will come. So there will be a cleansing of the church. And that is what Isaiah is really communicating to us, that God is looking at Ephraim to judge them, and He will build this building. He will provide a foundation. But there will be a cleansing of their sins, and that He will actually clean the whole house, and it will be an abode for Him. But at the same time, if you don't line up with Him, if you don't submit yourself to Him, your life is going to be like—(this is a neat little phrase that Isaiah has in there)—sleeping in a bed that's too short. You know you're never going to be comfortable. Or, as you are in that bed, the blanket is going to be too narrow. You're never going to be warm. You're just going to be uncomfortable. You'll have what you think you need, and it's not going to be right for you. But God will furnish it for us.

So we are this living temple, and Paul goes on to talk about that in 1 Corinthians. He says, “Do you not know that you yourselves are God's temple, and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.”

And that is what popped out at me again. We're talking about our responsibility to each other. We are together that temple, not individual things. But every stone has a purpose. Every part of it fits, and it's not us being added. The whole thing is with us. We're together. It's the unity. I think that so often we forget about that.

So we have this one-tier mentality, which we should have. But how does that break down? Because, even if you say, “Okay, we're all together. We're all responsible here in the church.” There are different levels of responsibility, and I don't mean levels of hierarchy, because again, it's across the board; it's horizontal.

Look at your outlines. There's a typo there. It's not Luke 21. It's Luke 22. I want to read that story, because Jesus is talking to His disciples at night, at the Last Supper.

In Luke 22:24-30, Luke is telling them, because there is a dispute among them. Who is going to be higher? Who is going to be better? And again, we see that in many churches today. “Well yes, we are in the inner circle.” Or, you see that there are cliques—all of these little things that our sin brings into the fellowship that we need to get rid of.

So Jesus tells them, as they are disputing, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who exercise authority over them call themselves benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as One who serves. You are those who have stood by Me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as My Father conferred one on Me, so that you may eat and drink at My table, and in My kingdom, and still sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

And here is where I think it gets interesting. “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” And what's interesting about that is, as

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you actually look at the Greek, He’s saying, “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked that he sift all of you, like wheat.” Not just Simon, it’s the Twelve. The you is plural. He says that he wants to get you, and just destroy what I’m building. But He says that He has prayed, and when it’s done, you, Simon, (now it’s in the singular), will come back and strengthen your brothers.

So what is the reason behind this, when you have things where God is punishing you, or God is correcting you, or God is allowing Satan to have his way over you for a part of the time? It’s not for you. It’s for your brotherhood. It’s for us. Now try to think of it! I’ve never thought of that before! With all the things I’ve gone through, have I shared that, for encouragement to each other? Don?

**Don:** I think it’s interesting too, Tom, that sometimes we think, “Well, when I sin, whatever particular sin it might be, even if it’s a thought, or a private habit, it’s not going to hurt anybody,” and that’s not true, is it? It affects the whole body.

**Tom:** That’s right.

**Don:** “A little leaven ferments the whole lump.” We have to remember that, that no matter what sin we may be involved in, it doesn’t just affect us. It affects all of our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ to one degree or another.

**Tom:** That’s right. And we tend to take ourselves out of the whole, and just look at ourselves individually. But if you go back and look at what Paul is telling us, about how the church works, he looks at gifts, for instance. We don’t talk that much about gifts in many churches. We think, “Oh yes, we have a really gifted preacher,” or “This guy gives a lot of money. He’s really gifted.” But think of all the gifts that Paul talks about. “There is a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. And there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all to everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

And we can list all the gifts that God does bestow upon us, whether it’s preaching, prophecy, all the way down to tongues. Well, how about helps? How about administration? How many people know who has the gift of administration in their church? The bookkeeper? Maybe that’s about it. Is that a gift, or is that just a service they have, a talent? We need to really look at how God empowers us.

As an architect, I’ve designed a good number of churches, and met with a lot of different congregations, and it’s interesting to compare them, as I go through and say that there are some churches where the leaders of the church are all presidents of corporations, or vice-presidents. They have very prominent positions in the business world, and they lead.

And then you come to the others, and you see that the head of this committee is the janitor! He has the gift to lead. He’s not endowed, because I’ve seen some cases, and this is actually true, where these guys, with their own talents and their own abilities, will then turn out and say things to the congregation that we know are lies. But they’re just trying to get the politics through, and so forth. And it’s so refreshing to look at a congregation that really looks at the gifts they have. And how do people, regardless of their worldly positions, how do their spiritual talents and their spiritual gifts help us as a body to grow?

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It might not be a big church, but it’s a God-used church. It’s a God-led church. And that’s so refreshing to see, especially with the way things are going in America today.

So then, Paul goes on to say, in 1 Corinthians, “But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer. If one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it.”

But I like the way Paul says that you suffer together; you rejoice together. It’s not about “Well, I know I’m special, for God has really blessed me, touched me.” You know, all that stuff! We’re one body, one building.

And, I think, also, that we think, too, that all of the abilities God has given us go beyond just spiritual gifts, because everybody has at least one gift. Many of us have several gifts, and to see them being used is a cause to rejoice.

But God has also given us talents. I’d like to look back at Exodus, when they’re getting ready to build the tabernacle, and to get the ephods developed, and all this. And God says, (He turns to Moses and says), “See, I have chosen Bezalel, son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled Him with the Spirit of God—with wisdom, with understanding, and with knowledge, and all kinds of skills, to make artistic designs for work in gold and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work on wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts. Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab, son of Ahisamak, from the tribe of Dan, to help him.”

Anyway, these two gentlemen He has picked out, and said that here are the guys who are going to lead with the skills I give them and the wisdom I give them to apply those skills. “I will also give ability to all the skilled workers to make everything I have commanded you: the tent of meeting, the ark of the covenant, with the atonement cover on it, and all the other furnishings of the tent.” And He goes on and tells all the things that are going to be made by men who have been given wisdom and skill from Him.

And so oftentimes, we tend to look in our churches and pass those kinds of skills off to outside consultants, or other people that we think we have. I think that it would be interesting to see a church that is totally dependent upon the grace of God, and His working in the group. That would be really neat! That would be something! But we don’t see that much.

So God gives us these gifts, knowledge and skills, to glorify Him, to work together for His glory, not for ours. So, as we do that, then I think that we also see what Bruce has talked about so often. As we are working with God, as He is directing us, we’re not only using the gifts and the knowledge and the skill, but at the same time we’re alive, and we’re producing fruit. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, then let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

Now that’s an interesting expression. “Keep in step with the Spirit.” So, while we have these activities, we know that the fruit that is being produced in us by God is for what? Our betterment, to make us feel better? Oh yeah, I’m such a forbearing person!

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*(Laughter.)* And I’ve got so much patience with Bill! We work with each other, because what are we as a group?

**Participant:** The body of Christ.

**Tom:** We’re the body of Christ, which is made up of redeemed sinners. So, is everyone perfect? Far from it! Is everyone being made perfect? You bet! But all these fruits that are being produced in us by the Holy Spirit are also for the bringing together and the cohesion of all these living stones in this great building that God is making.

So, looking at things from a spiritual standpoint, it’s not just that I’m reading the bible every day. I’m studying the Bible. I know all this stuff. That’s part of spiritual maturity. That’s part of desiring the pure milk. But I think also that it’s interacting with each other that is the key, as we grow up, because we’re going to learn a lot as we interact with one another, as we get to being parts of the real church, and not just going off and being by ourselves.

So, anyway, as we mature in Christ, Paul says, “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection in a mirror. Then, we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three things remain: faith, hope and love.”

But the greatest of these is faith, right?

**Participant:** No. It’s love.

**Tom:** Well, I thought faith was the most important thing about being a Christian. Well, I have a strong faith; I believe in God. He does everything for me. No, the greatest of these is love—love for God, yes, (and Bruce is going to talk more about our responsibility to God and to the church), but what are our responsibilities to each other?

**Participant:** Love.

**Tom:** Love! How do we love each other? It’s so upsetting to talk to people who have left the church? I say, “Well, why did you change? Why did you go to this other church? You’ve been here for five or six years.” And it’s amazing how many times I’ve heard, “Well, they’re so mean! The membership there is not very loving!” Whoa! How can you have the gospel being preached, and people not responding? Because, again, it’s not one clergy. Even though we’re in the same group, there are all these little hierarchies being built up, these little cliques. This is the way we do it. We don’t need your part. Or, you have to do it this way to be part of us, because we are redeemed s-s-s-sinners. *(Slight laughter.)* Don?

**Don:** Tom, if I may play devil’s advocate, hopefully not literally. It’s Halloween! *(Laughter.)*

**Tom:** Yes, go ahead.

**Don:** I guess I’d like you to elaborate a little more on what cliques are, because I could make a case that Jesus had His cliques, didn’t He? Didn’t He have Mary, Martha and Lazarus, whom he liked to spend a lot of time with? Didn’t He have the Twelve, and the three within the Twelve, Peter, James and John, and the one, John, within the three?

**Tom:** Yes.

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**Don:** I think that it's inevitable and natural, and not altogether sinful, that people do revolve around people who have things in common with them, who have a natural affinity toward them, that kind of thing, as long as you don't exclude others who want to be a part of that? Am I wrong in thinking that?

**Tom:** I don't think it's wrong. But I think we need to look at just what did Jesus do, because when it says that He went into Capernaum with His disciples, was that with twelve, or was that with seventy-two? When He sent them out, it wasn't the Twelve that He sent out, it was the seventy-two, and they all came back. So, I mean, Christ was looking at His church, and then He gives special responsibilities to everyone. Not that they're better, or superior, or have more authority. But as he looked at Peter, and said, “Simon, Simon,” (paraphrase), “the devil wants to have all of yuns. But I'm going to take you, and once you return, you are there to strengthen your brotherhood.”

We have different gifts, as we know. We have different assignments. That doesn't mean that anyone is better than anybody else. I think cliques come, Don, when we think that there's a superiority or a hierarchy.

**Don:** Okay.

**Tom:** Yes. I think that's important to know. As we work in the church, we're all different, but we're at the same level, because God died for all of us. And He didn't spend more time on the cross for one than He did for the other. Bill?

**Bill:** It's interesting, my experience with other churches. Any ministry that someone gets involved in then becomes his ministry.

**Tom:** Yes. Would you like to expand upon that a little bit more?

**Bill:** Well, then, they're untouchable.

**Tom:** Yes. That's the trouble. Yes?

**Participant:** There is a hierarchy in heaven. You know, God has the angels, the archangels, the seraphim and cherubim. There is a hierarchy in the church too. Just as we are all one in Christ, and all equal before the Lord, there are certain responsibilities with the hierarchy. That's not a bad thing.

**Tom:** Yes. I think there is a hierarchy in terms of administration and organization, because we do have responsibilities of clergy as bishops, priests, deacons, elders, and so forth. There are different aspects, and we organize like that. But it doesn't mean that anyone has a closer relationship with the Lord, is better than anyone else, is exclusive. And that's where I think that the sin comes in, and we'll talk about that, because there are so many things that can get in our way. And we think, “I don't do the bad things. I'm not a murderer. I don't have any adulterous relationships anymore, you know? (*Laughter.*) I've cut that out; I'm good!” We'll talk about that.

But the thing I want to get back to is what Jesus then tells the Twelve on that night before He is betrayed. “I give you a new commandment.” Some people say, “Well, this is not a new commandment.” He says, “A new commandment I give you, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, so you are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.”

People say, “Well, yes, but we got that from Leviticus, where God said, “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love

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your neighbor as yourself,” you know, and as the Sadducees had the young lawyer come up to Jesus, and asked, “What is the best commandment?” And He said, “Well, you know them. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like unto it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

So why does Jesus then come back and say, (*paraphrase*: “Fellows, I’m going to give you a new commandment, that you love one another?” He doesn’t say “that you love your neighbor.” That’s the old commandment. We have two. Now He says that we have three—that you love one another, so that the world knows that you belong to Me. The world will see the church by the love you have one for another. Yes?

**Participant:** You were saying that we are “to love one another, as I have loved you.” His love was sacrificial.

**Tom:** Yes.

**Participant:** And if we die loving someone else, that person can’t love us back, because I’m not there. I died.

**Tom:** You died to yourself.

**Participant:** Yes. And men are technically, in our nature, takers, not givers. For us to give, like He gave, would be supernatural.

**Tom:** Can you say that again, a little bit louder, so people can hear that?

**Participant:** We men are by nature takers, not givers. Women are more givers by nature than men. But for us to give like He gave, it would have to be a supernatural act. We don’t have that within ourselves.

**Tom:** Jim?

**Jim:** This has really just begun to strike me recently. The old commandment was to love your neighbor as you love yourself.

**Tom:** Yes.

**Jim:** But the new commandment goes beyond that. In the church, we’re called to an even higher standard: to love each other as Christ loved us, which is more than we love ourselves. He died for us.

**Tom:** He is our model.

**Jim:** This brings the commandment to a whole higher level.

**Tom:** How do we meet that? How do we conform to that? I can’t do that. Go ahead.

**Participant:** I look at it kind of like this. He literally laid down His life for us.

**Tom:** Mm-hmm.

**Participant:** And what is my life? My life is my actions, what I’m doing. So when someone in need needs something, and I’m out going to my own thing, am I willing to put my actions down? Am I willing to lay down my life, whatever I’m doing, to go and help someone else?

**Tom:** I think that a lot of times we look at that and say, “Well, if Jesus laid His life down, am I supposed to lay my life down for you guys?”

**Participant:** He already did it.



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**Tom:** Well, He did that. But the degree to which I love—and here’s the thing—I’m not an easy guy to love. And I bet you that there are a couple of us in this room who are the same way. We’re not easy guys to love.

But when you look at what Paul is saying to the church, he says, “I fear that, when I come, there may be discord, jealousies, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder.” In other places, he talks about what’s going on in the church—envy, drunkenness, orgies, ambition, dissensions, factions, hatred. Well, we’re sinners! We’re redeemed sinners. When we don’t live lives in the Spirit, and let Him direct our lives, you know, we fall into these things, because these are the works of the flesh. These are the things that you see in the world, especially if you work in a large corporation, or a non-Christian type of business. You can see a lot of these games being played. Competition can be just ferocious in businesses. Who gets to sit next to the manager and the boss? Or, if my boss has this kind of car, I don’t have the same kind of car, but I want to get one that’s almost as good as his, so that people know I’m on my way up. We all have these competitive things.

**Participant:** Christ’s love for us. Now what you’re describing is conditions. Christ’s love for us was unconditional, unimpeded. It didn’t matter what we thought of Him. He died for us. He gave it all. We put on the conditions. “I don’t think I like you today, Tom.” (*Laughter.*)

**Tom:** I’ve known that for weeks.

**Participant:** I can’t love you, because you didn’t see me in the store and say hi. So you must not love me, so I’m not going to love you. We conditionalize it, and Christ did not and will not. And so, any time I teach, it’s cling to the cross. Cling to Him, and what He did. That’s why we wear this arm band. Shoot for that goal individually, and then watch what happens, because of what we were talking about earlier: capillary action. Which drop of water is more important than the other. You start that one (*unclear*), and watch what happens. They all flow in the same direction.

**Tom:** Well put. We tend to do this, and even if we think, “Well, wait a minute. Now look at the stuff that Paul is talking about in the church. I don’t get envious of anybody. I’ve kind of cleaned that up.” What if you see that in church? Do you just let it go?

That’s why I brought in this comment by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. It might seem a little strange, but I’d like to hear your opinion on this. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “Nothing can be more cruel than the leniency which abandons others to their sin. Nothing can be more compassionate than the severe reprimand which calls other Christians in one’s community back from the path of sin.”

**Participant:** Amen.

**Tom:** And how do you do that? With love. But, a lot of times, we just let the things go. No, we should be as concerned about the other person as we are about ourselves.

**Participant:** Dietrich Bonhoeffer is especially illustrative in that, because his was sacrificial love.

**Tom:** Yes.

**Participant:** He was talking about that individually, but he was also doing that for his people as well in Germany.

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**Tom:** Yes.

**Participant:** And remember, he was arrested by the Gestapo because he was part of the Valquiris plan to assassinate Hitler. He was put into a concentration camp, and three weeks before the war’s end he was taken out, stripped naked, and hung.

**Tom:** Yes.

**Participant:** Now that was his sacrificial love, and I don’t know if I could have done that.

**Tom:** The good thing about it is we don’t need to worry about that. If God wants us to do that, He will use us.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Tom:** And He’ll prepare us, because it’s not us, and that is the thing that I think is important. It’s not us, but we still have to look at the housekeeping that we do in our own spiritual building, the body here. And I think one of the things is that, even if you look at all these problems you see within the church that Paul is talking about, what I like is one comment that James Montgomery Boice mentions in his commentary on Psalms. He says, “Even though we think we’re doing okay, and we have all these things clear, we still think that God approves of some of our prejudices.” I thought, “Wow, that’s something!” Yeah! When it comes to even the smaller things, clean house! We’re living stones. We need to be conforming to the building. Yes?

**Participant:** I can hear Bruce Bickel say, “Give back what you’ve received.”

**Tom:** Yes.

**Participant:** And He, God, was the first to give us love. He gave us grace. He gave His love. We are to do the same. We’re part of the priesthood. We’re clergy. (*Unclear.*)

**Tom:** Yes. “And the life I live I now live no longer in the flesh, but I live by faith in the Son of God.” I’m giving my life back. Use me, God.

**Participant:** One author—his name escapes me—wrote that we tend to hate people that sin differently than we do. (*Laughter.*)

**Tom:** Well put. As we conclude here, Peter then tells us, “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness, and to goodness knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, and to self-control perseverance, and to perseverance godliness, and to godliness mutual affection, and to mutual affection love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Yes?

**Participant:** I think that one of the biggest traps in the church is the pastor who builds the church like a man builds a business.

**Tom:** Yes.

**Participant:** It was meant to be built upon the spiritual gifts of the members. Last week, if you recall, the lectionary reading was in 1 Thessalonians. Paul said, “As apostles of Christ, you were very dear to us, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our lives as well.”

**Tom:** Yes.

**Participant:** That says a lot to me about the way the church should be.

## “THE RESPONSIBILITY TO BELIEVERS”

**Tom:** Yes, because what does God really want? As Hosea says, as God says in Hosea, “I desire steadfast love, and not sacrifice; the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.” So it’s not what you do, it’s who you are. Yes?

**Participant:** Nehemiah is a perfect example.

**Tom:** Very good.

**Participant:** He was the cupbearer to the king, but loved the Lord, and in fifty-two days builds a wall that’s seven or eleven miles, or something like that, and stood fast against the enemies because of his love of the Lord.

**Tom:** Yes, that’s right.

**Participant:** And he didn’t trust anybody else, including those in Israel.

**Tom:** Yes, even in his own group. You can tell. There are some who are more in the flesh, and not in the Spirit, and he’s focusing on God.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Tom:** Yes. And may God grant to us the ability to have vision to see things in spiritual terms, and to avoid lives that go into worldly traits, and so forth.

**Participant:** In speaking about Nehemiah, (*unclear.*)

**Tom:** Very good. So we need to trust God, because God gives us His love, the knowledge, the gifts, and everything, to be used by Him, not to chart our own course, but to follow His course, to keep us in the building, as living stones, as we’re growing and maturing, based on love.

One thing I came across that I wanted to pass on to you—(it’s on the last part of your handout)—have you ever heard of Henry Drummond? Henry Drummond was a preacher, a businessman as well. He was a good friend of D. L. Moody. But he has a little booklet called *The Greatest Thing In the World*, and it’s about love. It’s a very neat little thing. You can get it on the Internet off of Silkworth, which is a website done by A.A., Alcoholics Anonymous. Or you can probably get little copies of the book for about three or four bucks from Amazon. It’s a great little essay. But he writes at the end, “The spectrum of love has nine ingredients.” And that’s what I wanted to share, to make sure you have a copy of this, because it’s how we work with each other—with patience, with kindness, with generosity, humility, courtesy, unselfishness, good temper, genuineness, and sincerity. And then he gives the meaning. So take a look at this list, if you get a chance. It’s a neat little book. It used to be a classic. It’s a neat little book that was written about a hundred years ago. It’s still true today.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Tom:** Any last comments before we go on our way?

**Participant:** You mentioned the fruit of the Spirit. I think that is quite a good measure of the evidence in our lives

**Tom:** Am I producing fruit through me, or am I working in the acts of the flesh? Don?

**Don:** Yes. I just wanted to say, too, and if I’ve said it once, I’ve said it a thousand times, and so has Bruce, about the importance of the church. So many Christians today are individualistic. “Oh, I love Jesus, but I have no use for the church.” And that’s a contradiction.

## “THE RESPONSIBILITY TO BELIEVERS”

**Tom:** Yes.

**Don:** We’re a spiritual house, not just individual stones.

**Tom:** If you love Jesus, you love His church.

**Don:** Absolutely.

**Tom:** And that’s where we go. So let’s thank God. Father, we thank You for this time this morning. We thank You for all that You do for us and with us, as You work to keep us together. Help us to see Your hand in our work, and in our lives, that what we do is directed by You for Your glory, in building up the church here on earth, that others may see You and glorify You. We thank You in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Men:** Amen. (*Applause.*)