

“Maintaining Godly Relationships” Part 2

Holiness

1 Peter 3:8-12

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Bruce: More P. T. today. Another four hours to look forward to. After four hours of this stuff, it feels so good when it stops! (*Laughter.*)

Don, before we record anything, we need to celebrate people’s victories in our lives. And we have one. Corky, where are you? Do you want to stand up for a second, my friend? We have a man here who has just been inducted into the Western Pennsylvania Athletic Hall of Fame for his wonderful years of teaching swimming as a coach in the North Hills. So Corky Semler, we just celebrate you, buddy. (*Applause.*)

I remember, when I was with the ministry of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, that I did a survey years ago of who the most influential people were in your life, either positive or negative, next to your parents. 92 per cent of five thousand kids came back and said,--

Men: Coach.

Bruce: A coach. So Coach, we appreciate the impact you’ve had on those kids you’ve coached. Thank you very much. Don? (*Music.*)

Gracious and merciful Father, we humbly pray this day that You would be pleased to open our eyes, that we might behold You more clearly for Jesus’ sake, but also, Father, that You would deeply embed the truths of the Word that You’re going to teach us through the ministry of Your Holy Spirit. May it penetrate the depths of our souls and our hearts, that we might practically apply these for Your glory and that the world might see that we’re redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. And may it be so for Jesus’ sake. And all the Brave Men said,

Men: Amen!

Bruce: Men, life is about relationships. I invite you to turn in your Bibles, please, to 1 Peter chapter three. I’ll be reading verses 8-12. We’ve been in this for a couple of weeks. Peter is giving us some wonderful insight and some practical applications about relationships—relationships inside the body of Christ and relationships outside the body of Christ—in other words, relationships with insiders and relationships with outsiders. Let’s listen to the word of the Lord, beginning at verse 8 of 1 Peter chapter 3. I’m reading from the English Standard Version of the Scripture.

“Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary bless, for to this you have been called that you may obtain a blessing. For whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and His ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

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Bruce: Amen and amen. I’m going to do something unusual today. I’m going to show you the conclusion of this passage rather than working through it step by step. We’ll go back and analyze it in a moment. But look at the last couple of verses. I want to show you the consequences of having and maintaining holy relationships.

The theme that Peter has been teaching us in recent months has been the importance of us as God’s children having holy relationships—holy relationships within the body of Christ and holy relationships outside the body of Christ. You recall that in the passages previous to this chapter that he was teaching us about submission, the wonderful, glorious principle of submission. We are to be submissive as citizens, submissive as workers, submissive as husbands and submissive as wives. Those are the principles by which you and I relate to people outside, in the world.

Now the critical thing to understand is one little word in verse 8. See the word *finally*? All of you. It’s sort of an introduction, saying that this is going to be a review of what I’ve taught you previously. “Finally.” In other words, pay attention to this because this is a summary of all the things we’ve learned from 1 Peter chapter 1 all the way to 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 7. He’s basically saying, “Finally, listen to this because this is a summary of how we are to relate to people—how we relate to people within the body of Christ and how we relate to people outside the body of Christ.”

But I want to show you the consequences that Peter teaches us about having and maintaining holy relationships because, friends, life is about relationships. And the degree to which you and I maintain holy relationships within the body of Christ as well as outside the body of Christ is critical. And notice the consequences. Look down at the end of the chapter, the verses I just read. Look at verse 12. Here are the consequences of maintaining holy relationships inside the body of Christ and outside the body of Christ.

Notice. “For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous.” In other words God is viewing us with what we do. That means His presence is right with us. His eyes are on the person who maintains holy relationships.

The second consequence is this. “And His ears are open to their prayer.” His eyes are on the righteous. His eyes are on us. And He is present; He is looking at us, watching us in a wonderful, protective sense. Secondly, His ears are open to our prayers. When you and I are maintaining holy relationships, His ears are listening to the prayers that we give. And the reason that we have righteous prayers is because we have righteous relationships. When we are in righteous relationships and maintain holy relationships, you and I are going to know more discerningly how we ought to pray. And so His ears are more attentive to our prayer requests because we are working on maintaining holy relationships.

And there’s one more. Not only are His eyes on us, and His ears attentive to our prayers. But notice a third feature. “But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.” The word *face* means protection. He’s protecting us from those who do evil.

So notice the consequence of our maintaining holy relationships. His eyes, His ears, His face is with us. God’s presence is with us as we maintain holy relationships. That’s the consequence of what Peter is going to teach us by this word *finally*. In other words, finally, men, look at the summary statement that he is going to give us.

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Now the two major insights we’ve been examining, first of all, are these. There are certain attitudes that we have with insiders. You’ll see that beginning in verse 8. There are certain attitudes that we have with insiders. We talked about this last week. You recall that we are to have five attitudes with people in the body of Christ. The first one is *harmony*. Harmony is not uniformity. Harmony is cooperation in the midst of diversity. Within the body of Christ we’re to have harmony in the midst of our diversity.

Secondly, *sympathy*. The word for sympathy, as we saw last week, means to have a fellow feeling. We rejoice with people when they rejoice, as we just did with Corky. We also sorrow with people who are in sorrow. We have a fellow feeling. We are sympathetic to our brothers in Christ. That’s an attitude that we have that we bring to the body because we want to maintain holy relationships.

The third attitude is one of *brotherly love*. It refers to brotherly love. We have love for the brethren just because we know that we all have the same heavenly Father. The great insight of holy Scripture is this. If you’re in Christ and I’m in Christ, you and I have one thing in common that establishes the maintaining of our holy relationship and that is this, that you and I have the same heavenly Father.

That was the relationship that I had with my young pastor friend in Viet Nam. It had nothing to do with his ethnic background or my ethnic background, the color of his skin or the color of my skin, my education or his education. The one thing we had in common was the foundation of all of our relationship and that was this. Tin and I had the same heavenly Father. That’s brotherly love.

So we have harmonious attitudes toward one another in the body of Christ. We have sympathetic attitudes toward one another in the body of Christ. And we have brotherly love for each other in the body of Christ because we know this. The foundation of my relationship to every other believer is simply this. He or she has the same heavenly Father that I do. It starts right there.

The next one is this: *compassion*. That means to be tenderhearted, full of pity. You and I are full of pity when we see somebody in pain. We relate to them because we have a fellow feeling. We’re sympathetic, but we also have compassion. We’re full of pity for those who are suffering. That’s part of our relationship with maintaining holy relationships in the body.

And lastly, *humility*. Humility is a modest estimation of yourself. My definition is this: seeing that which is perfect—that’s the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. I see that, and I know I can’t achieve it. I know that I can’t achieve that. That means that I walk by faith and not by sight. So humility is based upon this. Do you really see the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ? And when you see that, you’re going to have a sane estimate of yourself.

At Jesus’ first staff meeting He brought His disciples together and He gave them eight principles of kingdom living. And the first one was this. “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” In other words, do you see yourself in reality? How do you see yourself? Do you see yourself as a spiritual beggar, that you’re spiritually bankrupt? You see, that’s the beginning of our humility. That’s how we relate to one another. We don’t relate to each other with pride and ego because I can do something better than you, or with

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discouragement because you can do something better than me. We relate to each other with the attitude of humility because we both see this. We see the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ and we both realize this. We can't achieve that! We see ourselves the way that Scripture lets us see ourselves. We see ourselves in reality. I'm spiritually bankrupt. I'm a beggar. That's the first thing that Jesus told His disciples at His very first staff meeting.

Men, you've got to see yourselves in reality. Do you see yourself the way that God sees you, as spiritually bankrupt, because when you do, He fills you with His grace. And now you begin to look at yourself not as the world sees you, but you look at yourself in the way that God sees you.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You see, the real battleground for us as men is this. Who do you believe? Do you believe what the world says about you, that your enough is never enough? Or do you believe what the Scripture says, that Christ is always enough? You see, it starts with “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” How do I see myself? That's the beginning of our humility.

So Peter says, “Finally,” men. Remember this. You need to have these five attitudes in dealing with people in the body of Christ, not only in your local congregation but worldwide. This is a Kingdom principle. This is not relegated to your denomination or your local church. Look at us. How many different churches do we have represented here? I think one time we recognized that we had about seventeen different churches. What's the attitude that we have for each other across those denominational and church boundaries? It's these things—harmony, sympathy, brotherly love, compassion and humility.

“Finally,” Peter says, have these attitudes. And when you do that, you're going to demonstrate something the world is dying to see, and that is holy relationships bringing about a holy life.

Notice the consequences. Back to verses 10-12. When you and I have those attitudes with each other in the body of Christ, remember that the consequence is this. The eyes of the Lord are on you. The ears of the Lord are more receptive to your prayers. And His face is against those who do evil and He will protect you. What more could we want? You see, that's the consequence of you and I having and maintaining holy relationships.

But Peter doesn't stop there. He goes on and says that this is how you relate to one another with the right attitudes inside the body of Christ. But how do you relate to those outside the body of Christ? Notice, we come to the next verses. He says, in effect, “Here are your actions with outsiders.” He just gave us insights into our attitudes with insiders in the body of Christ. What is our attitude toward outsiders? How do we relate to those?

Well, first of all, the reason that we have these attitudes inside the body of Christ is that we practice them on each other. Where do we make our mistakes? Make them inside the church, because the principle of maintaining holy relationships is what? Forgiveness. “Forgive, as the Lord Jesus has forgiven you.” When you and I can't forgive, we're basically saying, “I don't know how much I've been forgiven.”

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Forgiveness ought to be, for the believer, one of the easiest things we do!

Participant: Hmm.

Bruce: It ought to be one of the easiest things we do, if we’re thinking correctly, if I’m really understanding how much I have been forgiven. “Forgive, as Christ has forgiven you.”

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: If you understand that, forgiveness is one of the easiest things we can do because you’re thinking not about the offense they committed against you. You’re thinking about the offense you’ve committed against God and how gracious He was to forgive you!

Participant: Amen!

Bruce: And so you now have something to give away. Forgiveness and mercy ought to be the easiest things we do, divinely speaking. But humanly it’s difficult because of what? Pride, ego, I’m a victim. Look how my dad treated me when I was twelve! That’s why I’m messed up right now. You see, that’s the mentality we have. Victimization therapy I call it. The reason I’m messed up today as an adult is because my dad didn’t tie his shoes right when he was twelve. (*Laughter.*) You see, it’s his fault.

No, no, a thousand times no! You see, the easiest thing for us ought to be this. I understand how much I’ve been forgiven, and therefore when somebody offends me, I’ve got something to give away because it’s not about what they’ve done to me or the offense against me. It’s the realization of my offense against God and that He was merciful and spared my life and redeemed me through the blood of the Lamb. I’ve got something to give back.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: So Peter is now going to say, Look. Here is how you have actions with people outside the church. We practice these five attitudes inside the church so that we can what? Have actions outside the body of Christ, which is part of our witness, of going into the world and demonstrating the Kingdom.

So he gives us two insights of what we need to do with attitudes and actions outside the church. First of all it’s this. Don’t overlook evil, but overcome evil with good deeds. You don’t overlook evil. You overcome evil. Let me say that again. You don’t overlook it. You don’t walk away from it and turn your back. You and I deal with it! We manage it!

But how do we deal with it? We manage it by overcoming it with good works. You see, you and I overcome that evil by doing good works. Who can do that? Only the redeemed can do that. Only somebody who has been working on their relationships of harmony, sympathy, brotherly love, compassion and humility. That’s the only person who can take a look at evil and overcome it. You and I are not controlled by evil. We overcome evil. We control evil in the world by what? Good works, good deeds that only God can produce in us.

So let’s take a look at this. What does Peter mean when he says that you and I overcome evil with good works? In a hostile world it is not enough to overlook their evil. But you and I overcome it with good works.

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Now there are three kinds of lives that we can live in this world. We can live on three levels in this world. The first one is this. You can return evil for good, and that is satanic. You can return evil for evil or good for good, and that is human. But Peter says this. To return good for evil is divine. Peter is calling us to live a divine life with outsiders.

You can return evil for good and that is satanic. You can return evil for evil or good for good, and that’s human. That’s normal. That’s easy for us to do. I can return evil for evil and I can return good for good. That’s human. That’s natural. But Peter is saying no. With holy relationships you live an unnatural life, a supernatural life. You live a divine life, and that means this. You and I do not overlook the evil of this world. We overcome it by good deeds. And so we return good for evil and that is divine. That’s the first principle that Peter teaches us.

Now there are several examples in the Scripture that I want to call your attention to. How about Genesis chapter 45, where Joseph received his brothers who tried to kill him? His brothers premeditatedly tried to kill him when he was a teenager. And when he became the prime minister of Egypt, in control of all the distribution of the wheat in a famine, what does he do? Does he hold it against his brothers? He takes care of them.

Look at Genesis chapter 50 verse 20, one of the great verses in Scripture as I understand holy relationships. He says this. “What you meant for harm God meant for good.”

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Now who can live like that? That’s divine, folks; that’s divine intervention. That is not human; that is supernatural. How can you take a look at a group of men who said, “I premeditatedly wanted to kill you when you were a teenager. And now you just fed me and you’re telling me this, and you look at me this way?”

“What you meant for harm.” I understand what you wanted to do to me when I was a teenager. But God took that act of your wanting to kill me and “meant it for good.” That’s maintaining a holy relationship. Friends, you can’t do that in your own natural strength. That is absolutely divine, because you’re returning good for evil.

You and I are not controlled by evil. You and I overcome evil by good deeds.

Now I’ve got to be very honest. And you know this very much, so I don’t want to belabor it. But when I was in Viet Nam as a foreign air controller, all I did was destroy things. As a foreign air controller I marked targets for bombers to come in and blow things up. I would fly low level marked targets and set the aircraft at thirty thousand feet. Someone would drop their bombs and I would just watch things being destroyed.

Let me tell you what, folks. That’s evil. War is evil. It’s not anything that’s glamorous. You’ve got to realize that war is evil.

One of the things that ate at my soul and my spirit was this. All I’m doing is destroying things. And I said in my own prayer life, “Lord, is there something I can do in the midst of this evil and do something that is good?” Because I was deeply convicted about what Peter is teaching us right now.

You overcome evil with good. You don’t overcome evil with bigger bombs. You overcome evil with good.

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And I said, “Lord, is there something I can do in the midst of this evil to do something that is good?” To make a long story short, and you know the history of the rest of the story about building the orphanage. I had an opportunity to build an orphanage and that’s how you are still involved in the Tin Lan Church in Viet Nam to this day, because all I was trying to do was realize that I’m not going to be overcome by this evil. I’m not going to become what is destroying me.

There was one mission I flew. I won’t give you the details because it was just too rotten. But when I came back, all I could do was throw up. But they wanted to give me a medal for it. All I wanted to do was barf and throw up because I realized what I had done. It just ate at my soul because it was evil. And I just said, “Lord, don’t let me be overcome by evil. Let me overcome it with good.”

Brothers, we are not controlled by evil.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: We overcome it by good. Yes, sir?

Participant: What you just described and what I’m learning is that any type of trouble or evil that pushes you closer to God is good.

Bruce: “What you meant for harm God meant for good.” Genesis 50:20.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Stamp that in your hearts, men, because any time you see evil and somebody has an insult against you, reviles you, hurts you, that person may have intended that for harm, but God in His grace can use it for good. It all depends upon our what? Our maintaining holy relationships.

Men, we control the evil of this world. We just don’t know that we do. Peter is saying that you do it! And you do that by overcoming evil with good. We overcome it with good.

Another example would be David, who spared Saul’s life several times.

Participant: Mm-hmm.

Bruce: Saul was after him to try to kill him, because he didn’t want his throne taken away. David had the opportunity one day in a cave to end it. But he didn’t do it. He overcame evil with good. We do not watch evil go by. We don’t overlook it. We overcome it by good.

We don’t give people what they stimulate within us. We give them what God has given us.

Now that doesn’t mean that we don’t have the feelings. I’m not talking about that. This is not something where I’m just saying that you’re just cold doing this. You’re going to hurt just like everybody else. But you realize this. I’m not going to give them what they stimulate within me because I’m going to give them something that God has given me. And what is that called? Ministry. Yes, Don?

Don: Yes. I just wanted to say that not only did David spare Saul’s life, but he even mourned his death.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Don: I mean, I would have probably thought, “Oh, at last he’s gone!” But no, David mourned Saul’s death.

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Bruce: He mourned him at his death. He overcame evil with goodness. You and I don't give people what they stimulate within us. What we do is we overcome evil with good, and that is divine. Remember three levels of life—satanic, human or divine. Peter is saying that to maintain holy relationships we live at a divine level, not a human or a satanic level. Yes, Bob?

Bob: One of the best examples of overcoming evil with good might be Jesus' death on the cross.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: No question about that.

Go back to 1 Peter chapter 2, the verses right above this. Look at verse 22 of 1 Peter chapter 2. “He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. When He was reviled He did not revile in return. When He suffered He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly.”

Remember when we talked about this before? There is a difference between Jesus submitting to His authorities and entrusting that act of submission to God. We are told to be submissive to authority but never to entrust ourselves to authority. We submit ourselves to authority. But we entrust that act in saying, “Lord, I'm going to be maintaining my holy relationships. I'm going to take this act of submission to my authorities, and I'm going to entrust that to You and let You work it out in Your sovereign grace, because what You ordained the Son accomplished and the Holy Spirit applies.”

And one of these days I just wish I could have the heart of Joseph and say this. “I know that you meant that for harm. I know that. That was your intention. But God took that and made it for good..” So brothers, you and I are not overcome by evil. We overcome evil with good. Yes, please?

Participant: Verse 12. “The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous.” And the bottom of that, “The face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”

Bruce: That's right.

Participant: Before I started coming here, one of the things that I always looked at was my righteousness, my righteousness, my righteousness. I became legalistic and Pharisaical. But looking at 1 Corinthians 1:30, it's really the righteousness of Christ.

Bruce: Amen.

Participant: Whenever I mess up, I'm still considered righteous. This righteousness is that of a believer, and we just have to rest and rely on Christ for His righteousness. Like you always say, it doesn't give us a license for sloppiness. But even when we mess up, we fess up, and we go to that person and restore the relationship. But we're really relying on the righteousness of Christ, isn't that right?

Bruce: I'm wrapped in the robes of who's righteousness?

Participant: Christ's.

Bruce: I'm wrapped in the robes of the righteousness of Christ. How does God view us? He views us as being wrapped in His righteousness. His eyes are on the righteous.

And how do we demonstrate the righteousness of Christ? By maintaining holy relationships. That's an evidence of the righteousness of Christ working in us because it

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is divine. It is divine. It’s of grace. You can’t take credit for it. But you and I do this. We do the best we can. Do the best you can and trust Christ with the rest.

It’s His righteousness. He is our righteousness. We receive the righteousness of Christ. That’s justification by faith alone. God declares you as what? Declares you as righteous. That means this. God views you now, because of His redemptive work on the cross—your salvation,—He views you as being sinlessly perfect and perfectly obedient.

Now that doesn’t mean that we have a license to be sloppy. And it doesn’t mean that we live perfect lives. All we have to do is read the seven tests and seven traits of a true believer in 1 John, and then we realize that one of them is this. If you think you haven’t sinned you’re a liar and there is no truth within you. So we’re not talking about sinless perfection in our lives. It’s the fact that we get credit for, and God looks at us as being sinlessly perfect and perfectly obedient because of the righteousness of Christ.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You see, that’s why we’re not victims anymore! We’re not victims. We’re just vessels in our circumstances. We’re just vessels. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels,” for what? “To show that the all-surpassing power comes from” me and my education. (*Laughter.*) No way! “To show that the all-surpassing power comes from God,” living the divine life. Yes, Jay?

Jay: In what you’re teaching, just as believers, we need to understand our position in Christ and actually, prayerfully seeking the Lord to make our practice the same as our position.

Bruce: Absolutely. That’s why doctrine always precedes conduct. Doctrine always precedes practice. That’s why you have here the five attitudes inside the church coming before the application of the attitudes outside the church. We practice these five attitudes on each other so that you learn how to do that, so when the world comes and reviles you and says evil against you, you realize this. I’m not going to overlook it. I’m going to overcome it because I’ve been practicing this in the body of Christ.

Participant: How do we see the good when my brothers and sisters are being beheaded in the Middle East. We know that we pray for them, but what is the good that will come out of that?

Bruce: I have no idea.

Participant: “Precious in the Lord’s sight is the death of His saints.”

Bruce: I can’t be the Holy Spirit and interpret that for you. All I can say is-- Bishop, go ahead.

Bishop Rodgers: The blood of the martyrs is the seed bed of the church.

Bruce: Yes.

Bishop Rodgers: It has been that way from the beginning.

Bruce: Absolutely. Ted?

Ted: I agree with Bishop Rodgers. All you’ve got to do is look at church history.

Bruce: Sure.

Ted: You see again and again that when Christians have been persecuted the most they have prospered the most. So they are warned, “You’re going to lose your head.” (*Unclear.*) In China, in Rome, all these things happen.

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Bruce: We don’t try to examine things with our finite minds. We’re dealing with the infinite. We’re dealing with something that we can’t even grasp the edge of it.

Now I’m just giving you an illustration. About ten years ago I had a chance to teach at the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in China. I was teaching Christ in the Old Testament to many of these pastors. And they came from house churches and underground churches from mainland China and Taiwan, about thirty pastors. And as I got to develop a relationship with these men over that week, we used to talk about what it was that caused the church to grow in their area. They were telling me how they started with five people, and all of a sudden they had fifty people, and all of a sudden they had 150 people. Over the years the church just began to expand.

And do you know what he told me? He said, “The best thing that ever happened to us in China was Communism!” Communism grew the church!

I’m thinking, “What are you talking about? That’s anti-American!” (*Laughter.*) But he was saying this. “It was the environment of the Communist regime persecuting us that the church began to flourish.”

Now remember this. What I knew you meant for harm God meant for good. Folks, we have to entrust ourselves to a holy God. Don’t try to figure things out yourselves. Entrust yourselves. When you’re reviled, don’t revile. When you’re insulted, don’t insult. Entrust yourself to a God who judges justly. We have to let some things be in God’s hands. Yes, Don?

Don: Maybe I shouldn’t bring this up then. But in verse 10, “He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil.” Well, take Pastor Said. Maybe you’ve heard of him.

Bruce: Yes.

Don: He’s an American citizen who is in Iran, languishing in prison. How is he loving life and seeing good days? There is no answer to that humanly.

Bruce: Correct. Humanly we can’t answer that.

But we’re going to get to this next point. The next point that Peter says is that, first of all, we know that a major theme is this. Love life. We’re going to talk about that in a moment. How is it that we love life and have a joyful life? Peter is going to teach us that. Yes, sir?

Participant: Yes, brother. When Paul and Silas were in prison,--

Bruce: Yes.

Participant: What did they do when they were in prison? They were chained up.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Participant: They sang a song. They said a prayer. They trusted in God to be their defense.

Bruce: Let me give you—

Participant: (*Unclear.*) Once they came to the full knowledge that God was the ultimate God, and that there was no other God but that God. They entrusted their lives and souls.

Bruce: Amen.

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Participant: Whatever happened to them, God would deliver them. If it be death, God would still deliver them. If it be life, they’re delivered.

Bruce: Either way, they win.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Amen. Thank you. Yes, sir?

Participant: Back to ISIL real quick. Last week our preacher was talking about how Saul was not much different than ISIS, because he was going around persecuting Christians as well. What we need to do is to pray for their conversion.

Bruce: Amen. What’s the role of the church? To go into all the world and what? Preach the gospel. We ought to be praying for them. We’re going to see that in a moment, how we are to relate to people who are evil and mistreat us. We don’t know how to love life. We’ll talk about that in a moment. Yes, sir?

Participant: In Revelation in chapter 20 and verse 4, this is talking about the saints who reign with Christ in the millennium. “And I saw thrones and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads and on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” Now what we’re seeing today is that men are being beheaded. And the reason for that, as we’re told, is that Allah is glorified. And they use Christ as well in that statement because they have been against Him, and so representatives of Christ are beheaded. That’s the way they give glory to Allah.

Bruce: Okay.

Participant: Bruce, does this not come back to the sense of having an understanding of a Christian world view versus a secular world view?

Bruce: Absolutely.

Participant: I don’t know if all of you know Dr. Al Mohler’s Daily Christian World View, and the events happening during the day. And I think what happens is that we get sucked up into the secular world view and looking to politics as opposed to God’s history, God’s story, and what He wants to get accomplished.

Bruce: Amen.

Participant: At least for me, it goes back to Romans 8:28 for the believer. He’s got eternal salvation. So God is going to work things to His glory and it’s going to be good out of something that’s negative. So even with the martyrs, that is elevating who God is.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Participant: And it’s hard to see that if you don’t have a Christian world view versus a secular world view.

Bruce: “Do not be conformed to the system of this world, but be transformed by the . . . ? ? ?”

Men: “Renewing of your minds.”

Bruce: “The renewing of your minds.” If we don’t think right, we don’t . . . ? ? ?

Men: Act right.

Bruce: And if we don’t act right, we don’t . . . ? ?

Men: Feel right.

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Bruce: Yes, sir?

Participant: This Christian life was never meant to be ease and comfort. Mature men of faith in the Bible were thrown into the lion’s den and into the fiery furnace. One of them got nailed to a cross. So Jesus told us that we would be called to persecution, tribulation and trouble.

Bruce: Guys, remember the three words, the summary words that describe the body of Christ? Three words from Revelation all the way back to Genesis. Three words describe the body of Christ.

The first one is this: *remnant*. It’s not everybody. We’re chosen before the foundation of the world by God’s grace. It’s not everybody.

Secondly, it’s this: *persecution*. If you desire to live in Christ Jesus, you will be persecuted. The second word is *persecution*.

The third word is this: *warfare*. You and I are involved in spiritual warfare. That is the calling.

Those are the three words that describe the body of Christ from the beginning to the end, when the Lord returns in all his glory. It’s a remnant, it’s persecution and it’s warfare. We need to have a realistic calling of where we are living in the midst of a dying and dark world. Remnant, persecution and warfare.

Let me give you an illustration. Go to the book of Philippians. Now the reason I wanted to read that passage back in 1 Peter 2:22, about entrusting Himself “to a God who judges justly,” the phrase is this. God is going to be the One who will judge; you and I don’t. He’s the One who is going to judge justly. And you and I take the situations of this world. We’re obedient to the best of our ability and we trust Christ with the rest. And you take that and you entrust that to a God who judges justly. Let Him judge it. Let Him be the final authority on it. That’s His role, not mine.

Now let me give you an illustration of this. Go to Philippians chapter 1. Paul was in prison. Let’s pick it up at verse 3 of Philippians chapter 1.

“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you always and in every prayer of mine, for you are making my prayer with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this: that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you because I hold you in my heart, for you are partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in my defense and confirmation of the gospel.”

Now Paul is in prison. Now we know historically, from the book of Acts, that Paul was chained to Roman guards. Historically, the way this worked, every four hours they would change guards. He had somebody chained to his left wrist, somebody to his left ankle, somebody to his right ankle and somebody to his right wrist. He had two people chained to him every four hours.

Now notice the end. Go to the end of the book of Philippians. Go to verse 21 of chapter 4.

He’s saying, first of all, (*paraphrase*), “I’m encouraged because you are co-laborers with me in the gospel. I’m in prison; you’re not. We’re co-laborers. We’re doing the same thing. Where you are you’re doing it, and where I am I’m doing it. I happen to be

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in prison; you don’t happen to be. But we’re both co-laborers in the cause of the gospel and I rejoice in that, that we’re partners.”

Then he picks it up in chapter 4, verse 21. “Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household.”

Who were the believers? It was the Praetorian guard. The Roman guards were known as the Praetorian Guard. This was their prime duty because after they had won great victories for the Roman empire, they were brought back into Rome and they were classified as the “Secret Service,” if you would, for Caesar. They were his personal Army guard. Those were the two people that were chained to Paul.

What do you think Paul talked about for four hours? (*Laughter.*) Now notice. This is the ideal situation for an evangelist. (*Laughter.*) He has a captive audience. (*Laughter.*) They’re captive. They can’t move. What do you think he talked about? Do you think he talked about the desert hockey league batting sand pipers? (*Laughter.*) He wasn’t talking about sports. We know this from history.

How did Christianity spread in the Roman empire? It spread through Roman soldiers who were converted, who were sent after three years from the Praetorian Guard. They were sent out to the far reaches of the Roman empire, and what did they take with them?

Men: The gospel.

Bruce: They took the gospel! Now here’s what’s going on from a heavenly perspective. Nero, who was Caesar at the time, says this. “I’m going to stamp out this movement called Christianity because I’m going to put its leader in jail. He’s going to be chained to guards, and he can’t move. Every four hours he’s going to have two other guards chained to his ankles and to his wrists.”

Now that’s what Nero was saying. But from a heavenly perspective this was what was going on. In effect, God said this. “Nero, I’m going to appoint you to be the head of the evangelism committee of the Roman empire.” (*Laughter.*) “And the way that I’m going to do it is this. You’re going to put Paul in jail. And you’re going to put two guards at his ankles and his wrists for four hours for several years because Nero, I control the world. You don’t.”

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: “I control the world.” See, brothers, you and I are not overcome by evil. You and I overcome it with good because of this. What God ordains . . . ???

Men: The Son accomplishes and the Holy Spirit applies.

Bruce: Say it again. What God ordains,

Men: The Son accomplishes and the Holy Spirit applies.

Bruce: And we’ll pick this up next week because there is so much we need to learn about what it means to love life. Peter has just taught us about maintaining holy relationships—five attitudes with insiders, two actions with outsiders. And now he’s going to say that the result of that is that you learn how to love life. And you do that by controlling your tongue. And we’ll talk about that next week. So bring your outline again and we’ll continue this wonderful series that Peter is teaching us on maintaining holy relationships. And remember this. When we maintain holy relationships, “the eyes

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of the LORD are on the righteous.” The ears of the Lord are attentive to our prayers. And the face of the Lord is going to be up against those who are evil, and He will protect you.

Participant: That’s the consequence, brothers, of our trusting Christ, and trusting Him, to have holy relationships. May it be so for Jesus’ sake.

Bruce: Let’s pray. Lord, I just thank You for the practicality and sensibility of Scripture. It’s absolutely different than what the world would teach us, and that’s by design because You are divine and we are not. Father, help us remember this, that the quality of our life is directly dependent upon the quality of our relationships. Prepare our hearts for next week’s lesson, as we understand what it means to love life by controlling our tongue and dealing with evil by replacing it with good. And may it be so for Jesus’ sake. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen.” Have a blessed day, men. (*Applause.*)