

“Attitudes Necessary To Live a Holy Life”

Holiness

1 Peter 4:1-6

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Bruce: It’s really encouraging, men, to see the number of missionaries we have among us. And gentlemen, we thank you for your loyalty, your courage, your boldness for the gospel of Christ. And what an encouragement you are to us to come and join us on Fridays. We trust that all of us will be missionaries as the Lord is pleased to take us into the marketplace.

Participant: There you go.

Bruce: Because we’re m-8s—mission-minded members of a movement motivated by mercy for ministry in the marketplace.

Men: Amen!

Bruce: That’s who we are. And so it’s just an encouragement to have you with us. Don, do you want to set the tone for us as we sit before the Lord? (*Music.*)

Gracious and merciful Father, we’re just a group of men who desire to have You reveal Yourself through Your word. We’re not men who have answers. We’re just men who have needs and a great desire to serve you in the Kingdom for Your glory. Father, we pray that Your Holy Spirit will fulfill His job description this morning and guide us into all truth, for Jesus’ sake. Amen and Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Let’s turn in our Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 4, verses 1-6, continuing our study on holiness.

When we talk about being a witness for Christ, there are many ways you can describe that. Just a summary statement might be something like this. A witness is someone who gives somebody a reason to want to follow Christ. People have to make a choice. Do they follow Christ or do they not? A witness is one who gives people a reason.

Peter has been teaching us how you and I can be equipped to give a reason for somebody to want to follow Christ. So let’s take a look at our passage—1 Peter chapter 4, verses 1-6, reading from the English Standard Version, beginning at chapter 4 verse 1.

“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, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties and lawless idolatry. With respect to this, they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you. But they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. This is why the gospel is preached even to those who are dead that, though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the Spirit the way God does.” May God be pleased to open our eyes, that we might behold Him for His glory. Amen.

Men: Amen.

“Attitudes Necessary To Live a Holy Life”

Bruce: The Scripture describes the body of Christ, the church, in three summary words—*remnant*, *persecution* and *warfare*. Remnant, persecution and warfare. One of the great disservices we do in the church of Christ in America is to not tell them the truth about the Christian life.

Participant: Mm!

Bruce: We’ve deceived them by our silence. What are the ways in which a pastor can deceive his people? I think there are three ways in which a pastor can deceive the flock.

The first one is by *flattery*—telling them what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear, to make them feel good about themselves only, rather than understanding the significance of sin in their lives and the fact that Christ came to take away sin. So with flattery we can deceive people.

Secondly, I think we can do it through *heresy*. Heresy is letting somebody believe what they want to believe. That’s what a heresy is—just saying, “You believe what you want to believe.” Pick your own thought pattern. You just believe that. That’s a heresy. The Scripture talks about how we deceive people by letting them believe what they want to believe, rather than teaching them what they ought to believe, which is found in the Scripture.

And the third thing is *silence*. I think a pastor can deceive his flock by silence, just by not convicting them of the things that God would convict them of, and not preparing them for the things we prepare for warfare.

You see, unfortunately, we’ve deceived the church into thinking that the Christian life is an easygoing panacea, a Pollyannaish, Mary Poppins style of life, when really the Scripture says that you’re engaged in war. Scripture says that this is a spiritual battle that we’re involved in.

Now we are not to take on the forces of evil. We’re to stand, to put on the armor of God and to stand. Our role is to stand. Now we need to understand this. You never go into battle unless you have the right weapons.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You have to have the right weapons. When an athlete goes into a ball game, if he or she does not have the right equipment, they are not fit for the game. A fighter pilot does not go into his aircraft without his ballistic helmet. A baseball player does not go into the baseball game without his bat and glove. And Peter says the same thing about you and me, as we engage in the struggle to live a holy life in a world that is after us. And that is being involved in our spiritual warfare.

And Peter is going to teach us today the same thing about the believer—that you and I need to have the right and appropriate gear in order to withstand the attacks of this world and to be a witness for Christ that would cause somebody to want to follow Christ. That’s what a witness is. A witness is somebody who gives somebody else a reason to want to follow Christ.

Why is it that somebody would want to follow Christ? Do we give them a reason? Peter says that you’ve got to have the right equipment. You’ve got to have the right warfare attitude, the equipment, before you go into this spiritual battle.

“Attitudes Necessary To Live a Holy Life”

So to live a holy life, it's going to result in the unjust treatment of the world and the system of this world against us. We've already seen that. Look at 1 Peter chapter 3, verses 18-22—the example of Christ, the example of Christ in His patience, the example of Christ in His submissiveness, the example of Christ in His response to unjust treatment.

Now Peter says that we are to have the same attitude toward unjust punishment, toward unfair treatment that Christ had. That means we have to have the right, the privilege of going to warfare.

Notice the first verse. “Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves.” The word “arm yourselves” is a very interesting word. It's used of a Greek soldier putting on his armor and taking up his weapons to go into warfare. Now that's what Peter says. When you want to live a holy life in a world that's after you, you've got to arm yourselves with the right weaponry. Peter is saying that there is a certain protection and a certain weapon that we are to use as we engage in and attempt to live a holy life and live a separated life in the system of this world.

Now the armor that he speaks of is not external armor. It's really internal. He describes this equipment, this armor, in three attitudes that we must have. Notice what he says. “Arm yourselves with the same way of thinking.”

That's why the Scripture doesn't talk about offering change. The Scripture talks about transformation. Politicians always say, “Vote for me and I'll bring about change.” We can't change anything. The Scripture talks about our being transformed, not changed. We are transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit.

That's why Peter says that now, if you're going to go into battle, you've got to have the right equipment. And the right equipment, first of all, is that you've got to think right. That's why we gave you this card months ago. You've got to think right before you act right so you'll feel right. “Do not be conformed to the system of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

Peter is going to teach us today, men, that one of the weapons we need to have to go into battle, to live a holy life, and to give people a reason to want to follow Christ, is that you've got to think right. You have the same way of thinking that Christ had. And the way of thinking is found in 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 18, as we saw in the passage. So you've got to think right before you act right.

So Peter is going to say that you need three attitudes necessary to live a holy life in the system of this world. And the attitudes are these. We need to have a right attitude toward sin. We need to have a right attitude toward suffering. And we need to have a right attitude toward judgment. A right attitude toward sin, a right attitude toward suffering and a right attitude towards judgment.

Our attitudes, Peter teaches us, are our weapons. Thus are our weapons. And right or wrong attitudes, right or wrong thinking patterns, will determine how much of a separated, holy life you and I live. If we do not think right, we will not act right. You've got to think right.

“Attitudes Necessary To Live a Holy Life”

Our weapon is not external. Our weapon is how we think. And how we think determines how we act. Our attitudes are weapons because our outlook determines our outcome. And the believer must have the right attitudes to have the right style of life.

So having the right attitudes will be our armored protection. Having the right attitudes will help us resist the persecution of this world because, remember, we are engaged in spiritual warfare. So let's take a look at these three attitudes that Peter teaches us in this passage.

First of all, we must have a right attitude toward sin. You'll see that in verses 1 and 3 of chapter 4 of 1 Peter.

There are two things we need to look at. About sin in the past, we need to understand and have the right attitude about sin in our past. Peter teaches us that it is done with sin. Notice the verb tense. “For whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.” That word *ceased* means a definite past act. Something has happened in your past that has stopped. It has ceased.

That regeneration must be understood as a death to sin. When you and I are regenerated, God gives us a heart of flesh and removes the heart of stone. Something happens there and we need to understand this: that we have died to sin because of our union with Christ. That's what it means to be in Christ.

Look at Romans chapter six with me. Turn back to Romans chapter six.

So how is it that we look at our past sin? Peter is telling us that the right attitude is that you died to it. It's ceased. It has stopped. It doesn't exist anymore.

Let's see what the apostle Paul says in Romans chapter six. Look at verse 2. “What shall we say, then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?” How can you act that way when it's dead? Don't resurrect your old past sins! They have ceased. They have been paid for by the blood of Christ.

Notice verse seven of the same chapter. “For one who has died has been set free from sin.” Notice verse eleven. “So you must also consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.”

How about verse fourteen? “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”

When you are truly in Christ and understand what that means, you share in His sufferings and even share in the death of Christ. When you understand what it means to be in Christ, you share in His risen life. When you understand what it means to be in Christ, you share in His victory over sin. When that happens, you can say goodbye to your former way of life.

Men, you've got to look at your sin and say this. I don't have to live like I used to. If you're truly in Christ, God has regenerated you, given you a heart of flesh.

Participant: Yeah.

Bruce: You have died to your old way of life and you don't have to live like you used to anymore.

Participant: Amen.

“Attitudes Necessary To Live a Holy Life”

Bruce: Men, there’s great freedom in that! That’s how you need to look at it. Don’t let those things come back and haunt you. The thing that Satan is going to try to do is to play on your mind. He’ll play on your mind.

Now I don’t know if he causes a tree limb to fall on your car. I don’t know that. But I do know this. What he’ll try to do is to deceive and accuse you. He’s a deceiver and an accuser of the brethren. He’s going to try to resurrect those old sins in your life and say, “How can the Lord use you based on what you had done previously? Get a life, Bruce. How can that happen?”

You see, that’s satanic. You and I need to understand that I died to that. That was paid for. It’s done. It’s past. I don’t have to live in that anymore. Don’t let him resurrect it. He’s in the resurrection business by resurrecting those old sins in the past to haunt us, to prevent us from being effective in the kingdom of God. Yes, Don?

Don: Okay, Bruce. Ted brought this up a couple weeks ago. Why is it then that we struggle with sin now? And this is a question that you obviously can’t answer. Nobody can. But why is it that, if we’re dead to sin and that we reckon ourselves dead to sin, why didn’t Christ just instantaneously sanctify us one hundred per cent when we were regenerated so that we don’t struggle with sin anymore?

Bruce: Great question! (*Laughter.*) I will give you my feeble response. (*Laughter.*) If it were to happen instantaneously, we would no longer walk by faith.

Don: Yes. Good answer.

Bruce: We try to walk by sight. (*Laughter.*) And we say, “Look at the difference.” You see, that’s what drives us to our knees. God is always putting us in a position to trust Him more than trusting ourselves.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: We need to think right so we will act right. Part of our acting right is realizing that I am trusting the Person and work of Christ in this faith. I think, Don, my answer would be that God is always trying to put us in the position to walk by faith and not by sight.

Don: Yes, because the same Paul that talks in Romans 6 about reckoning yourselves dead to sin is the same Paul in Romans 7 who says, “Wretched man that I am!”

Bruce: Absolutely. That’s why Peter is saying that you’ve got to think right and have the right attitude about sin. We’re going to talk about sins of the present in a moment. Yes, Thomas?

Tom: I think that one of the big helps is to think about *sin* as what it is and not about *sins* as things you do, because we always focus on “Oh, I did this,” or “This is wrong.” But what is sin, really? We’re born in it.

Bruce: Yes. Sin is enmity towards God.

Tom: Yeah.

Bruce: It’s just enmity towards God. That’s what it is.

So Peter’s point is this. If you’re going to go into warfare, you’ve got to have the right attitude. And part of that is this. You cannot let the evil one resurrect the sins of your past that hinder you from being an effective soldier for Christ in this warfare. Do

“Attitudes Necessary To Live a Holy Life”

you understand what that means? Do you understand what I’m saying? You see, sometimes you have to say, “Get behind me, Satan.”

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Because he will resurrect the history of your past. And Peter is saying that you’ve got to remind yourselves, brothers, that you have died to that. It is a debt that has been paid for. “It is finished.”

So we need to have the right attitude towards sin, and that is that it is done and it is past. When we understand that, you can say goodbye to your former way of life. You don’t have to live like that anymore. You now are under grace.

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, sir?

Participant: There’s also the aspect of sin where we’re called to be overcomers. When the Israelites came to the Promised Land, God didn’t just wipe out all the residents that were already there. But they had to do battle and participate in the victory God was providing. He gave them the land.

Bruce: Yes.

Participant: But they also had to do battle. He has given us salvation. But we also participate in sanctification. So it’s part of the way that we do battle against the wiles of the enemy and thereby bring glory unto God.

Bruce: Amen. Thank you, thank you.

Turn to Galatians chapter five. Now friends, I’m not saying that this is easy. Understand that this isn’t easy. I’m not trying to deceive you. All I’m saying is that sometimes in the battle you have to think correctly about your past sins—that they have been forgiven, that you have been reconciled to God by the Person and work of Christ. You’ve got to remind yourself of some of the basics.

Go to Galatians chapter 5. Look at verse 24. “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its desires.”

Now that does not mean that you and I live sinlessly perfect lives. It means you have all the equipment of God’s grace to make the right choice and to think correctly about your past sin.

How about Galatians chapter 6, verse 14? “But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.” It basically means this. The rule of pleasure in your life is gone. That doesn’t mean that it’s not going to be rearing its head. But you don’t have to choose that anymore. The realm of pride in your life is gone. It doesn’t mean that it’s not going to be there to rear its ugly head. You have to choose not to do it. And secondly, the rule of passion is gone and the rule of grace and the life of God begins.

It means this. You can now be what you’re called to be, and that is to be in Christ. But it has to start with the fact that you’ve got to be careful, brothers, in the battle not to let the evil one resurrect those sins that hinder you from being an effective soldier of the cross. Yes, sir?

Participant: I’ve been shown that over the years you try to do this and you end up doing it in your own strength.

“Attitudes Necessary To Live a Holy Life”

Bruce: Yes.

Participant: And it's not about trying every day.

Bruce: That's right.

Participant: It's about dying every day.

Bruce: Yes. Good point. It's not about trying, it's about dying. You've got to die to yourself. That's a good illustration. Thank you.

Participant: It's not only that. Plus, I have no voice. (*Laughter.*) It's that God puts you to death.

Bruce: Yes.

Participant: Otherwise it becomes you trying to put yourself to death.

Bruce: Yes. Good point. Ted has said this. God is the One who puts you to death every day, rather than our trying to die every day. God does that on His own. That's what He does for us.

It means this. Now you have the power in God's grace to live according to who He has called you to be, and that is to be a soldier for the cross. You can be in practice what you are in principle. And what you are in principle is what you think. In principle God has given you a new spirit to lead you. In principle, before you couldn't choose but now you can because of the new principle of God's grace.

Now go to Colossians chapter 3, verses 3-10. Now this is part of the dying that God puts us through every day. And I'm not saying it's easy, men. All I'm saying is this is what is going on, and we need to understand and think correctly about it.

Colossians chapter 3, verses 3-10. "Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked."

Now notice. "Once." What does that mean now?

Men: Not now.

Bruce: You're not. You once did, but now you're not.

"In which you once walked when you were living in them. 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 have put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator. Here there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, Barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and in all."

You see, men, you've got to realize this. Yes, I used to walk in that. That used to be me. But it's not anymore. And that's because of the grace of God. That's because of the magnificent grace of God and the fact that He causes us to die every day to these things. That's the battle. That's the struggle. That's why Peter says that one of your weapons has to be thinking correctly about this. You have to think correctly about this. That's our first weapon as we go into the battle, attempting to live a holy life.

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, Don?

“Attitudes Necessary To Live a Holy Life”

Don: I’m going to be a bad boy here. *(Laughter.)* And you don’t have to comment on it extensively because you’ll be getting to it in a few years. *(Laughter.)* But 2 Peter 1:5? You know, the whole thing about trying versus dying?

Bruce: Uh-huh.

Don: My translation says, “For this very reason, giving all diligence.” Other translations say, “Make every effort.”

Bruce: Correct.

Don: How do you reconcile those two?

Bruce: I don’t.

Don: Okay. All right. Good. *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: The Scripture says, “Make every effort.” So that means I have certain responsibilities. The context of 2 Peter chapter 1 is the beautiful balance between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man.

Participant: Right.

Bruce: There’s a beautiful balance there. Now can I balance that out? No. But I trust it because God has said so. And in God’s sovereignty I understand that I am to preach both sides. God is sovereign and I am responsible.

And so I need to make every effort. What it basically means for me is this. I do the best I can and trust Christ with the rest. Do the best you can and trust Christ with the rest. We’ll get into that when we get into 2 Peter chapter 1. Yes, Jim?

Jim: I think of the verse that says, “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is working in you both to will and to do according to His good pleasure.”

Bruce: Absolutely. Yes.

Jim: (Unclear.)

Bruce: That’s right. That was Ted’s point about God being the One who causes us to die every day. He’s the One who works within us. Men, we have responsibility! This is not a panacea—God does everything. And it’s not—what’s the old saying?

Participant: Let go and let God.

Bruce: There you go. It’s not letting go and letting God. Men, it’s not that. It’s trusting God. It’s realizing that He’s at work, giving me the will to do it. He’s at work to give me the desire to do that and to give me the impetus and the effort to do that. Yes, Bill?

Bill: You just said it. If God doesn’t give you the desire,--

Bruce: That’s right.

Bill: You will not have the effort.

Participant: Amen.

Bill: One thing I’d like to point to in Colossians. You didn’t come to these verses, but chapter 3, verse 12—

Participant: Speak up, Bill.

Bruce: Colossians 3:12.

“Attitudes Necessary To Live a Holy Life”

Bill: Colossians chapter 3, verse 12. “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience.” Those are all from the mind.

Bruce: Exactly.

Bill: That’s where it starts, the thinking.

Bruce: Mm-hmm.

Bill: And if God doesn’t give you the desire, those things aren’t going to be there.

Bruce: That’s correct. God is the One who is at work within us. But men, we have to work at it in the sense of making an effort. We are responsible. That’s why you’re here on Friday, because we realize our need to be together to encourage each other to fight the battle.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: And to think correctly. That’s why we ask our questions. That’s why we trust the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth, because we’re making the effort to cooperate with God in that sense. He’s giving us the desire to be here. You wouldn’t be here if He didn’t give you the desire.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You would not be here on your own desire. You don’t have the desire to do that. God has given you a desire to come. We need to be responsible to show up. Do you know one of the great duties of church membership?

Participant: To show up.

Bruce: To show up! (*Laughter.*)

Participant: To show up, yes.

Bruce: That’s the first duty of church membership—to show up! (*Laughter.*) Because the church is there for your benefit. Show up and participate. Yes, please?

Participant: And when you slack off in that, the world ends up corrupting you and you don’t even know it.

Bruce: Absolutely. That’s the battle. We’re being corrupted and don’t even know it.

So the first thing Peter says is that you’ve got to have the right understanding about sin in your past. You don’t have to live like you used to anymore. That’s the point that he’s making. You don’t have to live like that anymore because God in His grace has given you a new principle of life. You’ve been regenerated and you now have His desire working in you to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. You don’t have to live like you used to.

Let’s look at it another way. The fact that you are suffering unjustly,—and when we’re talking about suffering, we’re not talking about suffering from being stupid. (*Laughter.*)

Participant: Well, not for everybody.

Bruce: Well, you’re the exception. (*Laughter.*) He’s talking about suffering for being holy, suffering for righteousness’ sake.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: That’s what we’re talking about. The world is going to be after us because we’ll be suffering for righteousness’ sake, not for stupidity. So we need to understand

“Attitudes Necessary To Live a Holy Life”

that this is not from what I do. It's because of who I am in Christ that the world causes us to suffer unjustly.

And we need to understand this. The fact that you are suffering unjustly is an indication that you have ceased from your sin. The fact that you are suffering unjustly for righteousness' sake is an indication that you've ceased from sin. The world directs its persecution against those who are living in obedience to God. It's an indicator that you have been released from the sins of your past. It's very reassuring for your salvation. It's a backhanded indication of your assurance of your salvation. When the world mistreats you because of your holiness and your righteousness, that's an affirmation, a confirmation of your salvation, because they would not be treating you that way if you were not living a holy life, unless something had happened.

So we need to understand the transition that has happened to us—the transformation because of how we look at our past sins. God broke the power of sin when He saved you, or else you wouldn't be suffering—suffering for righteousness' sake now, not for stupidity.

Now what does that mean for us? What should our response be when you suffer unjustly because of your righteousness that God is producing in you and giving you a desire to live?

Participant: Gratitude.

Bruce: Gratitude. It's "Thank You for confirming my salvation through these circumstances." When the world treats you unjustly, you can say, "Thank You, Lord, for affirming my salvation in Your grace because of these circumstances, because I would not be going through this if You had not given me the desire to live a holy life and produce that within me by Your grace."

So how is it that you and I look at these unjust sufferings? We need to do it with gratitude. It's an affirmation of who we are in Christ. You and I can respond with grateful humility to unjust treatment. That's what we see in Christ in 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 18.

So how should we look at our past sins? Along with your salvation, it's a closed matter. Your sins are a closed matter. It's over with.

Do you know what the easiest thing and the quickest thing we ought to do is? Forgiveness. Forgiveness is the quickest and easiest thing we should ever do. We should forgive just like that. Why?

Men: We're forgiven.

Bruce: You've been forgiven! If you don't understand your past sins, and you don't understand how much God has forgiven you, how can you hold something against somebody that is so little, so minor, when He has forgiven you so much?

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: How can you hold something against somebody this time when Christ has forgiven you for all the time?

Participant: Amen.

“Attitudes Necessary To Live a Holy Life”

Bruce: You see, the quickest response that you and I ought to have to the system of this world and to unjust treatment is forgiveness! It ought to be instantaneous, because you’re reminded of this. I have been forgiven more than what they’re doing to me.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: And when you and I do not forgive, that says more about us than it does about the person who is an offense to us. Do you understand that? It says more about us!

“Blessed are the merciful,” Jesus said at His first staff meeting, “for they shall receive . . .”??

Men: “Mercy.”

Bruce: Friends, you never run out of mercy because you are not the source of it.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: We are not the source of it. God is the source of it. You receive mercy. You give it away. You receive more. And friends, one of the greatest testimonies we can have to cause somebody to want to have a reason to follow Christ is when they see that we can forgive instantaneously because we understand this. I understand that my past sins have been forgiven and Christ has forgiven me so much. I now have something to give away to somebody else, and what is that called?

Men: Ministry.

Bruce: Ministry! Ministry is giving away to somebody else what God has given you.

We do not understand the power of forgiveness as a witness for Christ because the world can’t do that! The people of this world who are not regenerate cannot forgive.

I’m involved in several situations where a man just says, “I cannot forgive her for what she said.”

I said, “That says more about you than her.”

“But you don’t know what she said.”

I said, “How does that change anything?”

Men: Mm-hmm. Amen.

Bruce: That doesn’t change a lick!

Participant: That’s right.

Bruce: That says more about him than it does whatever she did. You see, how do you and I respond to the unjust treatment of the world? We recognize that our past sins have been forgiven. I think that forgiveness is one of the easiest things we should ever be able to do, and also it should be the quickest, because the moment somebody sins against me, what am I reminded of?

Participant: Your sin.

Bruce: My sins against Christ. Yes, please?

Participant: And you’re right. When he says that, what a shame that he’s held in that prison.

Bruce: Oh, my goodness, yes!

Participant: That he caused himself, that he put himself into.

Bruce: He’s getting exactly what he wants—misery.

Participant: Mm-hmm.

“Attitudes Necessary To Live a Holy Life”

Bruce: He’s getting what he has chosen. He’s choosing misery. He’s not willing to let his pride die over the fact. He doesn’t realize how much Christ has forgiven him.

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, please?

Participant: That ought to be another test of our assurance of salvation. Can we forgive right away?

Bruce: Amen.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: I’m not saying it’s easy, men.

Participant: There’s the test.

Bruce: That’s correct. That’s one of the tests. Can we forgive? If you cannot forgive, it says more about us than it does the person who has an offense against us. Yes, Ted?

Ted: Does that mean that if you cannot forgive instantly that you’re definitely not saved?

Participants: Ooh, no!

Participant: No, no. But I’m saying—

Ted: That’s a very absolute statement and it was disturbing to me. If you cannot forgive instantly, that’s a sign that you’re not saved.

Bruce: That’s not what you’re saying, Bob.

Bob: No, but what I am saying is that’s a test. If you want to test yourself—

Ted: I fail.

Bruce: You fail and what do you do?

Participant: Repent.

Second Participant: Right.

Bruce: You see, repentance is a way of life. Repentance is not a one-time act.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: We’re constantly repenting of our sin. Yes, Carl?

Carl: Bruce, we have to recognize that repentance is not an event. It’s a lifestyle.

Bruce: Amen.

Carl: It’s something that we have with us daily. And if we change our way of thinking, then it will change the way we walk. It will change our habits. It will change our attitudes. And then we won’t have to worry about those things, because if we walk in forgiveness, it’s because we know that we’ve been forgiven.

Participant: Come on!

Bruce: Amen,.

Carl: That’s what we are. It’s a lifestyle. And if you can’t live that way, then you’re telling God, “You’ve failed.”

Bruce: You see, that’s why Peter says this. You’ve got to understand and have the right attitude toward the sin of your past. You’ve got to understand that you’ve been forgiven. And when you understand that you are forgiven, you’ve got something to give away.

“Attitudes Necessary To Live a Holy Life”

Now that does not mean that you and I forgive instantaneously. It's going to be a struggle because we're human.

Participant: That's right.

Bruce: You have these natural emotions. You have these natural tendencies. Those are there. But the issue is the recognition that I need to deal with it. I failed. I didn't do it this time. I need to do it again. Lord, would You forgive me? So it's not an instantaneous thing.

What I'm saying in principle is this. Forgiveness should be one of the easiest things we offer and it should be one of the quickest things we do. That's all I'm saying. It doesn't mean that you're not a believer if you don't do it instantaneously. That's not what we're saying. All I'm saying is that there is a principle and it says this. This ought to be one of the things that's easy for me to do and do quickly. Yes, Don?

Don: I think that God takes it very seriously, if you read in Matthew 18 the parable of the servants, where one owes millions of dollars and one owes a few dollars. The one that owes millions of dollars is forgiven, but he won't forgive the guy who only owed him a couple dollars. And, you know, Christ has some very fearful things to say at the end of that parable.

Bruce: Yes, He does. Yes, please?

Participant: Forgiveness is not how I feel toward the person. It's how I act.

Bruce: Excellent. It's not how I feel about the person. It's how I act towards the person. Excellent. It came from one of our Bishops. (*Laughter.*) Yes, Bishop?

Bishop Rodgers: (*Laughter.*) I was just thinking in terms of the second coming of Christ. I think we all desire to live perfectly for the Lord.

Bruce: Yes.

Bishop Rodgers: But that doesn't come till the second coming of Christ.

Bruce: Amen.

Bishop Rodgers: So in between, we know we're in Christ already. But we're going to have to do the repenting and struggling right until He comes again in glory.

Bruce: Absolutely. Amen to that. That's why, men, you've got to understand that the Christian life is what? Warfare! You're engaged in a war! We need to have the right attitude toward that. This is not Mary Poppins. It's a struggle. And that's where we have a responsibility. That's why we need to be responsible in our attitude.

And so that's why we're taking our time to go through this Scripture. And part of it is to realize this. The way that I look at my past sins is going to indicate how I treat my present ones. If I don't think correctly about my past ones, I won't think correctly about my present ones.

And so we will not live sinlessly perfect lives. 1 John says that if you say that you have no sin, you're a liar and a deceiver and there is no truth in you. So we're not talking about sinless perfection. We're talking about a right way of thinking that puts us in a position of a right way of acting.

That's why we gave you this months ago. (A card.) Think right so that you'll act right so that you feel right. Feelings become the consequences of your thinking patterns, not the cause. The world is going to say that you need to think this way, act that way, and all

“Attitudes Necessary To Live a Holy Life”

of a sudden feelings become the cause of your actions. But we're saying that they're the consequence. Yes, please?

Participant: And since we're not perfect, even though some of us try to be, when we blow it, I think that God just looks that you turn back to Him to learn how to do it again.

Participant: Amen. That's right.

Bruce: Repentance. Repentance is a way of life.

That's why many people ask me what is the most important prayer in the Scripture? There are many prayers, and it's tough to evaluate one more important than the other. But for me personally, it's the one found in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, when he says, "Be merciful to me, the sinner." Have mercy on me, the sinner. I think that's the most powerful thing I can pray every day because it reminds me of this. I have been forgiven.

Now how do I act toward those who treat me unjustly because of my desire to live a holy life? I can give them something that God has given me. And that is forgiveness. That might be the reason that someone would want to follow Christ.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You see, what is a witness? A witness is someone who gives somebody else a reason to want to follow the Person and work of Christ. Yes, Dick?

Dick: When you started off this morning, you were addressing the world. I'm just saying that the world today doesn't even have an understanding of sin. The term *sin* is almost nonexistent. And even then, when you get into the church, the evangelical church, sin is not really preached strongly or definitively. And therefore there is little contrition because we take sin so lightly.

Bruce: Absolutely. What we do is, we pick out the sins of the flesh and make an issue out of them.

Participant: Yeah.

Bruce: What about the sins of the spirit?

Participant: That's right.

Bruce: How about pride?

Participant: That's right.

Bruce: When was the last time you heard a sermon on "don't do that?"

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: When was the last time you heard a sermon on covetousness? "Don't desire that!" You see, we take such things as abortion, adultery, the things that are external, and make them issues.

Participant: That's right.

Bruce: We overlook that the sins of the spirit are much more heinous in God's eyes than the sins of the flesh.

Participant: Come on!

Bruce: Correct. But we have a tendency to take that which is visible and we don't deal with that which is internal. And so you're absolutely right.

“Attitudes Necessary To Live a Holy Life”

That’s why I think a pastor can defraud and deceive his church by flattery. Dick, you just described it. It’s telling them what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear.

When was the last time somebody stood up in a pulpit and said, “Don’t do that! Stop it! It’s an offense to Christ!”?

Now you do that with grace. You do that with compassion. You do that with tenderness. But you do it with conviction. You do that with pathos because you understand this. We’re in a warfare and the people need to understand what the kingdom of God is all about. We’re involved in a difficult warfare and we need to be honest with people.

So the first thing that Peter says is this. Get a right view of your sins of the past. Then the next thing that he says is that you have to have the right attitude toward sins of the present. Since we must have the right attitude toward the sin of our past, “so that you will not live the rest of your earthly life for evil desires, but for the will of God.”

You see, the attitude toward your past sins prevents you from living for evil desires in your present life. When you understand your attitude toward your past sins, it will help you prevent the same attitudes in your present life.

Attitudes toward your present sin permit you to live the life for the will of God. Notice what he says in 1 Peter chapter four. “So as to live the rest of your life of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.”

What is God’s will? We’ve already discussed that a long time ago. Remember, there is a difference between God’s revealed will and God’s secret will. Remember Deuteronomy 29:29? “The secret things belong to ... God. But the things that are revealed belong to you” and the children of the next generation.

You and I spend most of our time trying to seek the secret things. And guess what? You won’t find them. And why is that?

Men: They’re secret.

Bruce: They’re secret. Why do you spend so much time looking for them? We need to spend our time looking at this. God’s will is not something you find. You don’t find it. You’re found in it.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: God’s will is not an it. God’s will is a you. You and I do not find out God’s will. We are found in it. The real issue is am I found in His will? That’s why we gave you this card.

The six revealed wills of God are consistent for all of us and this is God’s will for every one of us in this room, regardless of your status or position in life. And that is this: that you’re saved, Spirit led, sanctified, submissive, suffering and saying “thanks.”

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Those six words describe God’s revealed will. The issue is this. Am I found in this? Is that me? That’s the context in which you make your decisions. You don’t go looking for what job I should take. Your job is irrelevant. Will God lead you to one? He’ll lead you to one because you’re in His will, but the job is not His will. His will is who you are where you are.

“Attitudes Necessary To Live a Holy Life”

And so when you have the right attitude toward your past sin, it's going to help you understand the choices I make to live in my present sin, which is to avoid them and be found in God's will.

Take this card and look at this, men. It's very, very important that you understand this. There's a difference between His revealed and His secret will. And when you and I are found in His will, that's where we find out the secret things. Romans 12:2.

The more you live in His will, the more you'll know it. And the more you know it, the more you'll rejoice in it.

Look at Romans chapter twelve. “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual act of worship.” Worship is not something you do on the Lord's Day at eleven o'clock. Worship is a style of life. It's a way of living. “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that by testing you may discern what the will of God is—what is good and acceptable and perfect in His will.”

You see, men, when you and I are found in this, that's when you find out what His will is, and you'll discover it. Realize this. God's will is not an it. God's will is a you. Am I found in His will?

That's how we need to look at our present sins. And if you have the right attitude toward your past sins, it will help you to manage your desire to avoid the present sins. Yes, Don?

Don: Bruce, just for the sake of the transcript, is that *you* with a capital Y? Is that referring to God, or us?

Bruce: Which one?

Don: You said, “God's will isn't an it. It's a you. Well, who is the you?”

Bruce: Both a capital Y and a non-capital Y. It's both.

Don: Okay. All right.

Bruce: It's both/and.

Don: All right.

Bruce: God is the One who wills it. Therefore it's in me. But He's the One who gives me the will.

Don: Okay.

Bruce: So it's both a capital You and a small You.

Don: Okay.

Bruce: A capital You meaning God. It's His will. But it's in my life; it's me. I have the responsibility of acting and living on that and being obedient.

Next time, brothers, we'll pick up with what it means to have a right view of justice, a right view of judgment.

Two weapons we must take. I hope I haven't confused you all this morning. I feel like I've been rambling all over the place.

Men: No. Very good.

Bruce: You've got to have a right attitude toward your past sin. You've got to have a right attitude toward your present sin. Be found in God's will. You'll prove and find out what it is.

“Attitudes Necessary To Live a Holy Life”

Let’s pray. Heavenly Father, we just pray that You would override our inefficiency to teach Your word. May You be pleased to remove those things that are inconsistent with all of Your glory and Your majesty and Your attributes and Your character. Let us only remember those things that are consistent with Your revealed will. Father, we desire to be in the warfare for Christ, to be a reason that somebody may want to follow You. Give us the right weapons and the right attitudes, the right thinking patterns of our past sin and our present sin. And we don’t have to live like we used to. May we want to be found in the will of God so that You’ll be pleased with us and cause somebody to come to the saving grace of Christ. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen!” (*Applause.*)