

Be Thou Holy

by Charles Anderson

The sermon emphasizes the call to holiness and the miraculous workings of God in the establishment of Northeastern Bible College.

Duration: 49:30

Scripture: Genesis 1:27, Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:8, 1 Peter 1:13-16

Topics: "Holiness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the main subject of the Bible, which is man's reconciliation to God and redemption from sin through Christ. He emphasizes that the Bible tells the story of man's complete ruin in sin and God's perfect remedy in Christ. The speaker also shares a story about a woman named Mrs. Fleming who showed kindness to a group of men working on a road near her house. This story serves as an example of how miracles, both big and small, can be seen as the hand of God. The sermon concludes with the speaker highlighting the importance of being prepared for the struggles and persecution that believers may face, as mentioned in the book of Peter.

Transcript

I would just like to steal a few moments of my own time this morning to bear witness to how wonderful the faithfulness of God is in doing some remarkable things on our behalf. I mentioned the fact that out in the entrance of the hall you'll find some literature that I brought along that'll tell you a little bit about Northeastern Bible College, which is located, a lot of people ask me where is it located, it's up in the northern part of the state of New Jersey. If you could draw a line right from Times Square west for 20 miles or a little bit more, you would be right on the heart of our campus.

We're in a little town, it's a millionaire's town, but I quickly add we live on the other side of the tracks. There is a railroad that runs through this little town, but it is a very high-class community, and for many years the school was located there, I think since the beginning of the century, when it was a very high-class boys boarding school, and it's had ups and downs fortunes until we inherited it or brought it in as the campus of Northeastern Bible College in 1951 or so. I did want to tell you a very wonderful thing that happened, though.

The other morning, I think it was, I was telling you just a little bit about the origin of the school and how it began in my heart and mind, and so when we had a few students who gathered with us, and by the time we opened the school, we had, I think, seven, seven students, and we began in the buildings of the

Brookdale Baptist Church there in Bloomfield, and my idea was just to farm these kids out in the homes of the people, but it never occurred to me that we might have girls. I wanted fellows. Now, when you get fellows, you're going to get girls, you know that, or vice versa, and so it wasn't very long before young ladies began to say, can we come to school too? Well, I didn't quite know what to do with them.

We farmed them out for a little bit in the homes around about, but soon discovered that that doesn't work. There are varying disciplines in homes. Some homes are very easygoing, have no rules at all.

Kids could go to bed when they wished, get up when they liked, and so on. Others were very, very strict, and so the whole thing was a mishmash, and I realized that pretty quickly, so we began to search around and hunt for some place to settle in. Well, it was a futile search, and for a whole year or so, I looked all over the area, trying to find some big mansion or some place that we could find as our headquarters.

Then, one day, I looked across the street from the church, and there out in the middle of a field, really a little swamp, was an old house, and the kids of the neighborhood, whenever they have an old house in a neighborhood, they always soon invest it with a haunted quality. You know, it's an old haunted house. Nothing about it was haunted, but it was an old place, and the thought occurred to me that maybe we could get that house and use it as a girl's dormitory, and so one day, I plucked up enough courage to walk up the path, and there was an old gentleman sitting on the front porch in a rocking chair, and I came up to him, introduced myself, and I said, I thought I might as well get right at it, because he looked like a man of few words, and it turned out that way.

I said, would you like to sell this house? He looked at me, he said, are you crazy enough to want to buy it? Well, that took the breath out of me a bit, you know, and I said, well, uh, uh, yeah, yeah, I think I am. He said, how much? I said, how much you want? He said, how much you give me? So, I thought, well, he's going to be blunt. I didn't have a dime in my pocket, so I said, give you a thousand dollars.

Now, this is a big three-story house, a nice big place. He said, sold. Now, I said, look, uh, just a minute.

That's awful fast. I said, I don't have the money right now. Can you wait till I get it? He said, you said you wanted to buy it, didn't you? I said, yep.

He said, take your time. I said, do I have to sign any papers? He said, what for? Well, I said, I got to sign something, don't I? He said, you said you want to buy it? I said, yep. He said, I said I'd sell it.

He said, yep. He said, you said you'd give me a thousand dollars? I said, yep. He said, I said, sold, sold.

He said, that's all we need. Your word's as good as your bond. So, then I had to go out and hunt for a thousand dollars.

Got a few men together, and just as I walked away from this gentleman feeling, what in the world have I done? I bought a house for a thousand dollars. I knew it needed fixing up. It was old.

Little did I know how much fixing up it needed, because it took 40 gallons of white paint just to be outside. It was so dry that when you put the brush, it just sucked it right out. You couldn't walk him down.

You just went, you know, from the bucket to the shingles, and we finally got that thing. Well, anyway, he said on the way out, he said, oh, by the way, mister, he said, you just bought the house, but you didn't buy the ground. I said, what are you saying? He said, I don't own the ground, you know.

I just own the house. Well, then I was in a pickle. Here I got a house, and it's sitting on somebody else's ground.

How dumb can you be? And furthermore, Lord, how'd you let me? I began to blame the Lord. It's his fault, you know. He let me stumble into this.

Well, there was a lot of detail in between, but finally, we were able eventually to get both the land and the house and got it fixed up. But the main thing I want to tell you about it is this. We were not in that house more than three or four weeks with the girls deposited there in a dormitory when we heard about the campus in Essex Fells, and so we moved up there.

And this house, then I turned it over to the Brookdale Baptist Church, and it became a missionary or a home, rather, for the lady who was in charge of all of our missionary apartments that we had for missionaries. And still, we didn't own the land. And I found out who owned it, and it was owned by a Jewish man, a developer, a very well-known developer in that area who was noted for taking tracts of land and really developing them very wonderfully.

I went to see him. His name was Mr. Levine. And in my dealings with this Jewish gentleman, I want to say I've never met a more honest, square, trustworthy man in my whole life.

When I hear about Jewish connivery and how Jews take advantage, I always say, but I know one who never did. He was more honest than a lot of people I knew who were even Christians, to tell you the truth. Well, I went to see him, and he said, no, I can't sell you that land.

He said, because there's a big highway going to come up through here someday. Well, it was a dream at that time. People talked about the Garden State Parkway, which was going to be a main drag all the way from the southern part of the state, connecting eventually with New York State Highway up in New York State.

And he said, it's going to come right straight through this area, and I'm going to sell off this land to the state, and I'm going to get every nickel I can out of the state of New Jersey. And, believe you me, they're going to pay a lot for it, because they can't finish this highway without going through my property. And he said, it looks to me like they're going to go right through that house.

So, he said, if you own it, you better move it. And where in the world am I going to move it? Well, there's a lot down at the end of this plot. If you want to move it, he said, I'll, I promised the old lady who owned it that if she ever had to move this house, I would put a foundation under it and a cellar.

I said, will you do it for me? He said, sure, you move it, and I'll put the cellar under it, and the foundation, and so on. Well, in between time, we put a lady, one of those mothers-in-Israel type of persons, an Irish lady with a warm heart, who was the matron of our mission homes, and we put her in that house, and she was living there when that highway that was a dream began to inch its way northward, and people began to realize that pretty soon it would be up in our neighborhood, in our area. And one bitter cold winter week, the surveyors came up in that area, and they were out right outside the house surveying the property, and Mrs. Fleming, this lady with her, you know, she always has the coffee pot on.

No matter what time of day you go in, there's a hot cup of coffee waiting for you, and she saw these fellows out there, you know, doing this and blowing on their hands, and she couldn't stand for that, so she opened the window and hollered, boys, you want a hot cup of coffee? Come on in. Boy, did they come in.

Four or five of them, they came in, and they sat there, warmed up, got their coffee, and then went back to work.

Little after lunch, same story, she called them in again, so twice a day, they got a good cup of coffee and some cookies and stuff, and Mrs. Fleming, she took care of them. By about three days, they were soon calling her mom, you know, Mom Fleming, and one day, one of those men said, you got a nice house here, Mom, very comfortable and very nice. Yeah, she says it is, but I'm going to lose it.

He said, what do you mean you're going to lose it? Well, she said, you know, you, that's what you fellows are here for, aren't you? You're, we're building a road up here, they say, a big highway. It's going to go right through my house, and they're going to have to tear it down or move it or do something, so I'm going to lose it, and one of the men who was the head of the crew looked at the rest of them and said, yeah, is that so? Is that so? Hey, Bill, get out those blueprints, and so they spread them out on the kitchen floor, and they studied them, and one of them says, sure enough, you're right, Mrs. Fleming, that road is scheduled to come right here, and we're going to have to knock down your house, I'm afraid, and one of the fellows said, it doesn't have to, does it? One of them said, no, why shouldn't it? So, they took a pencil out, blue pencil, and they moved the road over like this, running around, and that's how they built that Garden State Park where you go up there today, and there's a curve in the highway right there, went right on past, we still got the house, we got the land, we got the whole works, but they had to move a highway to do it, and we just feel the Lord did that for us. Well, we could tell you many, many stories, and I tell you that this morning just to encourage you to still believe that our God is in the miracle-working business, and He does work miracles for us.

They're not always big miracles, you know, they can be little ones, but anyhow, they're miracles, and they are the revelation of the hand of God. Now, we better get talking about what Peter's got to say to us this morning, and I want you to get the flow, if I can, of this first chapter. That's about all we'll cover, but up to this point, I'm trying to show you how Peter has in mind an objective.

He wants to comfort and prepare, if you please, and strengthen his readers for the conflict that is yet ahead. They're going to go through some hard and harsh times of temptation, and struggle, and even persecution, and they must be prepared for that. They cannot come into it innocently and unaware, and so he must get them prepared, and in that process of preparation, before he begins to speak directly on this subject, he identifies them, and we've shown you up to now how that he points out where that God has put them where they are providentially, in order that there they may be his mouthpiece, his spokesman to spread the seed of the word, and then he points out to them that they are unique in every sense of the word, because the entire divine trinity, God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son of God, have all been active in their salvation, and he reminds them now that they are members of a entirely new family.

They have a new relationship to God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and having been born into that family, and it's a birth relationship, they are also heirs. Wonderful to know that they're heirs. They have a great and a magnificent inheritance which is reserved in heaven for them, and they're kept for it, and they rejoice in that fact, although he says, I'm not unmindful that you're right now, for a little time, you're suffering a lot of temptations, manifold temptations, but I'd like to remind you that this is the trial of your faith, and you mustn't recoil from that, because the trial of your faith will eventually purify it to the point where, when you stand in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, your strengthened, purified faith will be to his honor and praise and glory.

This person whom now you don't see him with the eye of sight, but with the eye of faith, and you're in love with him, and ultimately, you will receive the end of your faith, the complete completion of the salvation of your souls. Now, having raised the subject of salvation, maybe we could accuse Peter, or is it our understanding, of doing what we preachers often do. We find some detours here and there, and take off once in a while, until our audience wonders what in the world that's got to do with the main subject, until we get back on the main highway.

But, he has now raised the subject of salvation. That's the great subject of the bible. We were talking the other evening with one of the ladies at the table who said she was reading at the moment the a-biography of the great bible teacher Donald Gray Barnhouse.

I knew Dr. Barnhouse personally, and had wonderful times of fellowship with him, and I remember that Dr. Barnhouse used to say that you can summarize the story of the bible in one single sentence. He used to say that the bible is the story of man's complete ruin in sin, and God's perfect remedy in Christ, period. And, that's a very good summarization of the subject of the bible.

Its main subject is man's reconciliation to God, man's redemption, and all of God's activity to bring this creature whom he made in his own image and likeness, but who, through the disaster of sin, lost his relationship with God, and now he must be won back. And, the whole story of the bible, no matter what the subject material is, is related to God's great plan of salvation. And, Peter, now having spoken of the great salvation in which these believers are rejoicing, waiting for its final installment indeed, this great theme, he says, was the object of prophetic search.

Even the prophets found some problems in this subject. It wasn't that they didn't understand the plan of salvation, so much as it was that there were some time elements involved here. They saw a messiah, they saw a redeemer, they saw the seed of the woman coming, and he was suffering, and he would be bruised as Isaiah the prophet depicts him, and yet they saw him reigning in splendor, and glory, and power, and they couldn't quite put those two together, as indeed the very at this very moment the Jewish reader of the old testament has difficulty in bringing those two together.

What these prophets did not see was that there was a time span between the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, and you and I are living in that time span between those two great points. We're living in the age of grace, in this period, this church age in which God is calling out of all peoples a people for his name. We are a unique people, let me remind you.

The church is unique. The church is a special group of people. Old testament saints were not in the church, and great tribulation saints won't be in the church.

The church is a special, unique group of redeemed people whose history is written between the coming of the Holy Spirit at the day of Pentecost, and that exciting moment which we call the rapture, when the church will be completed. We are unique. People often ask, do you think there will be any class distinctions in heaven? Of course there will be class distinctions in heaven.

We will not all be like little sausages, spiritual sausages, so long, so thick, and so wide, exactly alike, stamped out. I dare to believe that even in eternity, the church will be a separate, distinct entity in all of heaven, for through the church will be displayed the manifold grace of God to all beings, whoever they are, in heaven, earth, and under the earth. And, the church is not revealed in the old testament.

These prophets wrestled with this. As they dealt with the subject of salvation, they were perplexed when they saw a suffering savior or messiah, and a reigning, glorious one. The sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, was a perplexity to them, and so they searched as diligently as they could to find the key to this, and that's what Peter says.

They searched what, or what manner of time, the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. And to them it was revealed that not to themselves, but unto us, they did minister these things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the holy ghost sent down from heaven, which things the angels desire to look into. This subject of salvation was not only object of prophetic search, it was the subject of apostolic preaching.

It's what the apostles preached, God's great salvation. That preaching was accompanied by the power, and miracles, and signs of the holy spirit testifying to the fact that this was a divinely authenticated message which they brought. And, in addition to all of this, this whole subject of salvation was a matter of angelic curiosity.

The angels were curious about this. They couldn't quite understand what God was doing, what God was about to accomplish, and so you read, these are the things which the angels desired to look into. This great subject of salvation, there it is.

And, you know, it's still a great subject. Are you not overwhelmed every once in a while when you think that God has saved you from your sins and brought you to himself? You may not understand many of the vagaries of theology. You may not be able to delve into the deeper mysteries of the word, but if you have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, you can daily walk in the exciting, exhilarating thrill of the fact that you are the object of God's redeeming grace, and he saved you.

That's great. If you know nothing else, that's the most important thing to know. And so, Peter, having raised that subject, now, at long last, he's about ready to make some exhortations to them of a practical nature.

So, he says in verse 13, Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that's to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. So, here, and then he goes on, As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy. What is his exhortation now? That, as believers living here in the midst of unconverted pagan people, your life is to be characterized and marked by holiness.

Now, everybody in our world is more concerned about happiness than they are holiness. Do you notice that? Everybody wants to be happy. They want to be happy.

I wonder sometimes when I hear interviews on television and radio, and they ask, What's the most important thing to you in your life? Well, to be happy. We're going to get shocked someday when somebody says, Oh, I long to be holy. Our culture doesn't understand that.

Holiness. And, Peter now says that what you're to do as obedient children is this. Gird up the loins of your mind.

Be sober. Now, he calls the Christian to a neatly girded mind. You know, the Bible says, As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

A lot of the Lord's children are characterized by loose and flabby thinking about divine things. I'm a great believer in the importance of Bible doctrine. I think that a church, a congregation of people, ought to be indoctrinated.

They ought to understand the great basic truths of our Christian faith. There's too much preaching, I fear, today on contemporary subjects. I think I don't get invited to certain circles to speak, because I don't have a series on how to do things, like how to get along with a homely wife.

Four ways of being victorious, even though you drive an old, broken-down Chevy. How to curb your temper. Five keys to self-control.

That's the kind of stuff that's being dished out today from our pulpits. Frothy, light stuff. Sometimes it's clothed in what we call seminars.

You know, my mother and father never knew how to spell that word, or my grandparents. They never had a seminar in parenting, how to raise kids. They raised us on some good old-fashioned oatmeal and a razor strap.

My father had an old-fashioned razor strap. He used to strap his razor, you know, and boy, I tasted that lots of times. I used to hide it, bury it in the yard, but I had a squealer of a sister, and she saw where I hid it, and she blackmailed me to death.

Threatened to tell my mother and father where the old razor strap was. Well, now today, I suppose my parents would be arrested for child abuse, but so it is. Now, Peter is calling to gird up the loins of your mind, bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

He uses a picture, you know, of the people in those days wore loose, flowing garments, the gentlemen as well, but if a man wanted to run or run a race, what did he do with these long, flowing garments? Well, he had a girdle that held his garments to his waist, so he would tuck these garments up under the girdle, nice and tight, so that his legs were free. He wasn't hampered or hindered in movement. So, Peter says it's like that with your mind.

Gird up the loins of your mind, so that you're not flabby and loose in your thinking, and it's interesting to notice that in the Greek, it's the aorist tense that means a once-for-all completed action, so you could translate this verse, wherefore having put out of the way once for all everything that would impede the free action of your mind, then he says, obey and hope for the to the end for the grace that's to be brought to you with the revelation of Jesus Christ. But the main thrust here is a call to holiness, to be like him who has called us and redeemed us, and to be holy. Oh, what a need there is in our day for holiness, eh? We've been disappointed, we've been shocked by what we read and hear and see of great, or at least outstanding Christian leaders who've been marked by unholiness of life, and our world holds many Christian leaders, nearly all of them now, in suspect.

They think we're all alike, but you know, friends, there's no substitute for a holy life, none, and when a man or woman displays holiness in his life, he is being a real witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I hasten on to say as we come to the end of this chapter, toward the end of it, that the other thing that ought to mark the Christian, and that Peter calls him to, is this, verse 22, seeing you have purified, seeing you

purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently. Now, if you know there were many words, several words, I should say, for love in the Greek language, just, and we often say the Greeks had a word for it, so they did.

They wanted to speak about a particular kind or brand of love, affection, they had a specific word to cover that. We don't have that in our mother tongue. We are very poor in our expression.

We have one word, L-O-V-E, now we even reduce that to a heart, and so on your bumper you see, I heart my dog, red heart, you know, I love my dog. We even reduce it to L-U-V, I love something. Well, that word love is a fascinating word in English, can mean a lot of things, but we only got one word to explain it.

Sometimes we see two kids sit in the back of church behind a pillar somewhere, they're teenagers, and they titter, and they laugh, and they pass notes and pictures, and they sit so close that you can't even get a piece of paper between them, and we say, ha ha ha, it's puppy love. They're in love, those two kids, L-O-V-E, or later on when they mature, or another couple comes down the aisle for a wedding, a Christian wedding, the preacher sees something that oftentimes the congregation never sees. He sees the expression on the faces of two people, born-again Christians who are now being united in the bonds of holy marriage, and there's an expression on their faces that ought to be captured by some artist or photographer.

I remember one wedding we had where the guy, we rehearsed everything perfectly, smooth as silk, and we came up to the part where he was to say, I, Albert, take thee, Patricia, to be my wedded wife, and he got started, and he stopped, and I thought, oh no, he's forgotten what he's supposed to say, but he looked at her, and right out loud, he said, boy, do I love you. Man, that just blew that thing into smithereens. Everybody starts sniffing, and blowing, and coughing all over the place, you know, but it was great, and how do you explain that, that attitude, and that, you see, that's love.

What, you mean the same thing as those kids back there? No, no, not quite, same word though, L-O-V-E. Then, I pick up the newspaper, and I find that some Hollywood harlot who's been married three times, or four times, she's going to marry another guy, or a guy who's been married also two or three times, and when they interview her, she says, for the first time in my life, I'm in love. L-O-V-E, same word.

Gosh, it must, there ought to be some other word, don't you think, to explain whatever that is that she's talking about? Or, look at the face of that lady bending over the crib of a fever-stricken child's mother. She hasn't slept herself for nearly 48 hours, and they're urging her to sleep, and to eat, but no, she can't. Why? Because she's so desperately in love with that child of hers.

We call it mother love. Then, we open the book of God, and we read, for God so loved the world. L-O-V-E, L-O-V-E, L-O-V-E, same word.

There ought to be some other words. Then, I walk outside, and I see two people banging around with some catgut over a net, and one of them yells, 40 love! L-O-V-E, same word. Man, there's got to be something.

So, the Greeks had it. They had different words, and if there's any man who would understand the distinction in the words that the Greeks used, this man, Peter, did, and it's rather interesting to notice what he does in this passage. You see, there are, among the words that the Greeks had in their vocabulary,

were two that you're familiar with, I know.

One is the word phileo, which means love, of course, and, like, for instance, we have the city of Philadelphia. Adolphos is the Greek word for brother, and phileo is to love. So, Philadelphia is the city of brotherly love.

I mean, it's supposed to be. See, that's it. Phileo, to love.

Then, there's another word, agapapo. Now, that word was not used very much, even in classical Greek. So, whenever they wanted to talk, when the writers of the New Testament wanted to talk about the affection of God, this characteristic of God which we call the love of God, they either had to coin another word, or borrow a word from the existing language, and infuse it with a different and fuller meaning, which they did.

They borrowed the word agapapo, and it is always used of God and his love. Never do you read that phileo is used of God. Always agapapo.

Now, at the risk of knowing that I'm, one of the dear brothers prayed here the other day, and I said, amen to that very much. He said, bless our brother who will be bringing things both new and old, and I thought that'd be a lot old, but what I'm saying to you now, I'm sure you know. You remember the 21st chapter of the Gospel of John.

You'd think the Gospel of John ended at the end of the 20th chapter. Looks like it ought to end right there. These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God, and believing you might have life through his name.

Amen. That's the end of the gospel, for John has proven his case. But, there's a whole chapter that follows.

The next chapter, after these things, after what thing? After the resurrection, after the crucifixion, Peter was the instigator of it. He said to the other disciples, I go fishing. Well, you'd expect that.

He's a fisherman. If you're a natural born fisherman, you get where you think there's fish drives you nuts, unless you get a fishing rod in your hand to go after, and he's a born fisherman. But, you see, the point is that that wasn't just a mere little fishing expedition to get out of his system, something he hadn't been able to do for two or three years since he was accompanying Jesus on his preaching tours.

That would have been a simple thing, and it would be strange that John should even record this. Why bother recording, in the inspired word of God, a little fishing expedition? No, there's more implied. Back in the original language, it's as if Peter is actually saying something like this, I have had it with this outfit.

I'm through. I once was a fisherman. I'm going back to fishing, and I'm going to stay with it.

I'm going to fish for fish. I'm done. And several of them said, we go with you.

That was a dangerous moment for the cause of Christ. Our Lord was depending upon them to spread the news of Calvary, that God was in Christ there, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, because there he made him to be sin for us. He knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

What a message to preach! And the resurrection, he's depending upon them to bear that testimony, and Peter's saying, I'm shutting it off. I'm not going to be bothered with it. I'm going back to fishing for fish.

And you know the story. They went out, and it was a mess. It was a failure.

They didn't catch anything until the Lord came along, and he performed the miracle. He revealed himself to them. But then the whole purpose, I think, of that chapter begins to show itself when the Lord Jesus singled out this man, Peter, and probed his soul.

And in that conversation, and it does not come out in our English, you just keep using that word love. Peter, lovest thou me? Yea, Lord, thou knowest I love thee. Peter, second time, do you really love me? Yea, Lord, you know I love you.

L-O-V-E, L-O-V-E. No, it is not that at all. He is using these two words that we referred to a moment ago, phileo and agapao.

Two times over, Jesus uses that higher word. Agapao is the higher word. Phileo is the lesser word.

Now, you have to understand what's involved in these words. You see, this higher word, agapao, means the love that is to be expressed as agapao love is a love that's called out of one's heart by an awakened sense of value in an object which causes one to prize it. Neither of these words have in them a maximum of emotion.

They have a minimum of emotion, and a maximum of evaluation. And what Jesus is saying to Peter is this. Peter, do I call out of your heart such emotion for me that you prize me above all else and everyone else, and therefore I have awakened in you, have I awakened in you a sense of my value so that you prize me above all others? And it was that that Peter was honest about, you remember, and he said, Lord, you know everything, and you know my heart.

You know that I phileo thee, just to be clumsy in the use of that word. Now, this is a different kind of love than Jesus is talking about. It's an unimpassioned love, a friendly love.

What it really means is it's a love called out of one's heart as a response to the pleasure one takes in a person or an object. Lord, I'm always happy to be with you. I feel good when I'm with you, and with these others, your followers.

I take pleasure in being with them and with you. That's how I feel. That's not what the Lord is asking for.

Have I awakened in you, Peter, such a sense of my value that you prize me above everyone and everything else? When our Lord said, lovest thou me more than these, I don't think he was saying more than these fish. I don't think he was saying more than these disciples. I don't believe that Jesus ever sets you against me, and we against them, in our love for for him.

Never. It's not a competitive thing at all, but he's asking, do you love me more than anything, anybody, anything at all? Have I awakened in you that kind of love, Peter? You prize me above everything else? Lord, you know everything. You know, I can't, I can't say that, and so the thing goes on down.

Now, Peter, remembering that, writes, seeing you have purified your souls and obeying the truth through the spirit unto unsaned love of the brethren, what word is that? Agapao. Then, see that you, now he changes the word, phileo, see that you love one another with a pure heart, fervently. Strange that he

should play with those two words, but he's very practical, this Peter.

I think he knows what we're like. Now, let me conclude this. We say we love one another.

I can say I love you this morning. I hope you can say you love me. That's asking a lot, you know it? I don't know you from Adam.

I don't know your name. I know your faces. I have a terrible time getting your name and your face together, and I have to say, you know who I mean.

What's his face? Eh, not what's his name, but what's his face? And I don't know you. I don't know much about you. I don't know whether you're generous or stingy.

I don't know whether you're miserable to get along with, or nice and pleasant. I don't know whether you're a happy person, or you're a gloomy gus. Makes no difference what the weather looks like.

It's going to be foul weather before the day's out. Maybe that's your attitude, or maybe you're just an up kind of a, I don't know a thing about you. So how can I honestly say I love you? I'll tell you why.

The reason why I love you is this. God thought so much of you that he chose you in his sovereign grace to be his child, and if God thinks you're that worth that much, then I can do no less than feel toward you as he must feel toward you. He loves you, and I love you because he loved you, and you love me for the same reason.

It's got nothing to do with our friendship or continued fellowship. It's primarily a matter of evaluation. God, you are God's child.

You're valuable. God prized you so much that he gave his son as the price of your redemption. If God thinks that much of you, how can I think anything less of you as a child of God? But it has some practical expressions, too.

Up in the mountains of North Carolina, a little few miles from Asheville, we have a little cottage. We go up there all too infrequently, and you know that's Baptist country up there. You take any Saturday newspaper, and I can draw a line from the little town where we live, five miles, and in that circle I counted 64 Baptist churches.

They got every kind of name you can name. You know, Three Peas in a Pod Baptist Church, the No-Hell Baptist, the All-Hell Baptist. They got them all, and there's a little Baptist church right near us called Cars Hill Baptist Church.

Now it's a little country church, and we go there, usually on a Sunday night when I'm up there and not preaching anywhere, and these are simple folks. I mean, just plain simple folks, and the preacher is a good man. He preaches the Bible, but he has a tendency to kind of play loose with and downright murder the King's English, and he has some odd expressions, and I enjoy every one of them.

They're really funny, but they bring pleasure. I love to hear it. Well, one time, not long ago, we were there, and he was making some announcements, and the announcements are as fascinating almost as the sermon, covering the various phases of life, but this one thing struck me, and it was merely an illustration of what we found in that little church.

There is a love for one another that is so unique that I haven't run across it almost anywhere else, but he got up this night, and he said, this is a Wednesday evening prayer meeting, he said, now folks, Brother Johnson, you know he hurt his leg, and he ain't able to cut no wood for the wintertime, and the winter's going to come on, and he's going to need wood, and I'm asking tonight how many of you men will be out Saturday morning, bring your own axe, and we're going to cut some wood for Brother Johnson. How many of you fellers will come? I'll bet 25 men put their hands up, just like that, and all those guys would be out Saturday morning helping to cut wood for Brother Johnson, stack it up for the wintertime. Simple, yeah, but an expression of love, very practical, one for the other.

There's a terrible dearth of this, isn't there, among believers? We get so centered in ourselves that we forget that we're enjoined by Peter. See that you love one another with a pure heart, fervently, as born-again children of God. Be marked by holiness of life and fervency of love in your witness for others.

Now, Lord, we thank Thee for Thy sweet and great grace toward us. We're nothing without Thee. We were nothing.

We could never be anything if it were not for that sovereign grace of God, and for the love that Thou didst display on the cross of Calvary that often mystifies us and baffles us, we do nonetheless thank Thee, and we pray, Lord, that Thou would grant to us a heart full of love for one another, not only for Thee, but for those who belong to Thee, just because we are of value to Thee. We ask this in Christ Jesus' dear name. Amen.

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