

What Manner of Persons Ought Ye to Be

by Leonard Sankey

The sermon emphasizes the urgent call for Christians to live holy lives in preparation for the coming of the Lord.

Scripture: Psalm 24:3

Topics: "Holy Living", "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the urgency of the current hour and the need for holy and pious lives. He reminds the audience that while we may face pressures and challenges, God remains in control and unchanging. The speaker references Peter's question about what kind of people we should be in these latter days, highlighting the importance of clean hands and a pure heart. He also shares a story about two sisters who prayed for revival on their island, leading to a group of men praying fervently and experiencing a breakthrough when they examined their own hearts and sought forgiveness.

Transcript

Well, what a joy to be with you. Aren't you glad that the Lord sent rain? Someone told me that for sure that means you will not go to sleep the rest of this morning. That makes me happy.

Well, it is such a joy for my wife and I to be here. As Brother Gideon mentioned a moment ago, it has been my privilege to minister in Egypt on the other end of the African continent. But this is the first time that I have had the privilege of being here in South Africa and in particular with you here at Kwasi Sabantu Mission.

My wife and I have just absolutely had a wonderful time. Our professor in the last session said that as Christians we are to use hospitality one with another. And those of you here at Kwasi Sabantu have shown tremendous hospitality to us and we thank you.

And so that means that should you come to my country, I also show hospitality to you. So I would like to suggest that you rent a bus and you come to the United States. Now don't go too far into the ocean.

Unless there is a big boat there. Thank you so much for giving us such a wonderful welcome to Kwasi Sabantu. We are so delighted to be with you.

And in the few days that we have been here, we have sensed that bond not only of friendship but of Christian fellowship. So I would say let's be friends and let's be brothers. Now I apologize that we Americans don't speak English very well.

But perhaps just enough for you to understand me. We are going to be reading in 2 Peter today. I'm going to ask our professor if he will allow me to hitch my wagon to his message.

And in reverence to the word of the Lord, I'm going to ask you to stand with me please. And we're reading in 2 Peter chapter 3. And we are beginning with verse 8. Are you ready? Alright. But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Verse 11 will serve as our text for this message.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness? Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Would you bow your heads with me while we pray? Our Heavenly Father, we thank you this morning for the sense of your presence. We thank you for these blessings during these days of the ministers' conference. We thank you for the messages that we have heard from the other preachers.

And especially we thank you that the Holy Spirit has spoken to our hearts. And we want you to speak to us this morning. In Jesus' name, amen.

On Monday morning of this week, I had the privilege of speaking in the college. At the close of that service, the young people sang the song that they sang here this morning. And I thought I would like to begin the service telling the Holy Spirit we want him to come and speak to our hearts.

And one of the phrases in that song says, Holy Spirit, my heart is open wide. And I want to say this morning that my heart is open wide to him. If your heart is open, would you say amen? So you understand English, all of you.

The text of the conference is, see then that ye walk carefully, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. First of all, I want to say that indeed this is an urgent hour. That is, it's urgent for you and for me.

God never has an urgent need. God never has an emergency. We do, but not God.

He is as fully in control as he ever has been. He is still the Almighty One. He is still the Unchanging One.

He is the All-Knowing, Almighty God. He still sits on the throne of the universe and the earth is his footstool. We face political pressure.

God has none. We are under economic pressure. God's wealth has not diminished by a quarter of a percentage point.

Our world is crazy with violence. It is disgusting with evil. Hampered by godless leaders.

But God is secure and serene and thank God he is all that we need. But in view of the urgency of the hour as it concerns you and it concerns me and the ministry that God has given to us, Peter looks at these latter days in which you and I are living. He sees the coming destruction and he asks us this question.

What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness? Another way of saying that is what holy and pious lives you ought to lead. And another way of saying it is what kind of person ought each of you to be in consecrated and holy behavior and devout and godly qualities? Peter speaks here of the coming of the Lord and as always in scripture insists that ethical behavior and holy hearts are the only adequate preparation for meeting times of urgency. Our manner of life is to be holy.

In this same chapter as we read a moment ago and again referring to the urgent nature of the last days, he says seeing we look for such things be diligent that we may be found of him in peace and without spot and blameless. Let's tear that verse apart just a little bit. When he says to be diligent, what does that mean? It means to do your utmost in order to be found of him in peace.

So that we can meet him without terror, being sprinkled with his blood and sanctified by his spirit. We should expect to meet the Lord without moral and spiritual defilement and in sincerity without blemish or defect. In an hour like ours, an hour of urgency, our lives should be marked by the power of God operating in our lives.

For us to live in a holy way and to be pious and morally pure are qualities impossible for the natural man to attain. But thank God it is not beyond the power and the grace of God. I don't think anyone would doubt that the day that you and I are living in is a day of urgency.

Our world is wavering on the edge of emergency on almost any level of human life. We could talk about the economy, or we could talk about social life, the condition of public health, and violence and famine in government. But for those of us in ministry, the principal preoccupation and the burden of the urgency of this hour is on the level of biblical spirituality.

The absence or the waning of vital godliness constitutes the gravest of dangers to the welfare of the planet. Of religion, we have hundreds. Of gods, there are thousands.

Of the interpretations even of Christianity, there are many. And yet if we were to initiate a search to find people who live vital godliness, it is sometimes very difficult to find those kinds of people. And yet vital godliness is the greatest element that this world needs.

Vital godliness is light shining into the darkness of corruption and crime. Vital godliness is a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden. Vital godliness is the salt that flavors our world.

But the absence of the power of God through the church is what allows evil to flourish without restraint. The challenge of our conference theme is redeeming the time for the days of evil. And it is a challenge which demands that we walk circumspectly.

To walk circumspectly means that every step we take, we're looking around us to see what the devil may be doing. We walk cautiously, being aware of the dangers that are around us. Our text also says that we are to redeem the time, and that requires a wisdom beyond ourselves.

Paul says, don't be fools, but understand what the will of God is. But unless we have the help of the Holy Spirit, we will never understand what the will of God is. But in that scripture, in the book of Ephesians, part of that will is stated in verse 18.

Because in verse 18, it clearly tells us that we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Here's the challenge. Understand what the will of the Lord is.

And what is that will? God wants His servants and His people to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In His earlier ministry, Jesus had said, if you, being earthly parents, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall our Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? And I'd like to say this morning, if you are here and you are spiritually thirsty, what we need to do is to come to Jesus. And one reason why I say that is because in the Gospel of John, in chapter 7, Jesus makes a comment about the Holy Spirit.

And He says, if any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink. Aren't you glad this morning that Jesus Christ opens the door? If we're thirsty, we can come to Him! Hallelujah! But I need to tell you that no lesser equipment than the filling of the Holy Ghost will allow us to meet this urgent day in which we are living. Oh my brethren, may God put His urgency upon us, be filled with the Spirit.

Jesus said, blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. The Spirit of God is not called the Holy Spirit by mistake. The Spirit is holy.

The Heavenly Father is holy. Jesus Christ is holy. We need to understand that holy is more than simply being set apart.

Holiness has a moral quality. Holiness indicates purity and cleanliness. And if we walk in the light and allow the Holy Spirit freedom to work in our hearts, He will be continuously cleansing us and leading us into deeper depths of His grace.

Let's talk a little bit more about what the Bible says about these urgent days in which we are living. Paul's description of the latter days is absolutely stunning. In 1 Timothy chapter 3, the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter days some shall depart from the faith.

According to what the Holy Spirit is saying, that there are people who have faith and they leave it. Would you let me talk to you out of my heart just for a moment? Does that happen here? How burdened and how sad my heart is to see those who one time shared a platform with me. They preached and they prayed and they sang.

But today they don't want me to come near to them. And they don't want me to come close to them. It's a sad thing but they have departed from the faith.

Now there's a little warning here. Anyone who has been in the Christian faith and determines to walk away, sears his conscience. Like someone who works with his hands until his hands become hard and callous and he no longer feels the pain that he one time felt.

So that when we turn from the faith our conscience is hardened and we no longer feel that sting of conscience as we used to. No longer does the Holy Spirit's voice trouble us as it one time did. Satan has taken the conscience that one time was godly and sensitive to spiritual truth and he has branded it as his conscience.

And Satan's brand on our conscience makes that conscience insensitive to right and wrong. And I also want to say that if we override the voice of conscience it won't be long until we override the voice of the Holy Ghost. So when we begin to back away from truth, when we are no longer hungry for a spiritual diet and when we begin to doubt the trustworthiness of this book.

That's when we stop discerning the difference between right and wrong, opening the door for Satan to brand his conscience with his mark. Paul also says that in the latter days this know that in those latter days perilous or dangerous times shall come. It is a time when men will love their own selves.

They will be covetous and boasters and proud and blasphemers and disobedient to parents and unthankful and unholy. And Paul says they are ever learning and never come to the knowledge of the truth. They will have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof.

Now let's wrap up the first part of this message by a couple of comments here. Let's look at the theme of the conference. These are days of urgency.

And I think you would agree with me that these are times of extreme spiritual urgency. And besides that there is often urgency in the church. If you listen to what the gentleman said last night it is a picture of the urgency that exists in some churches.

And certainly the churches in the United States of America are in a very very urgent situation. I don't know anything about your churches but my guess is you also have a time of spiritual urgency. Second thing is that God does not have an emergency.

Aren't you glad for that? Hallelujah. Third thing I want to say is that God's prescription for those of us who minister to him in these urgent days is that we who bear the vessels of the Lord's house are to be clean. Isaiah's experiences related in the sixth chapter of his prophecy instructs us.

He faced a crucial time in his life. The earthly king on whom he had depended had died. But Isaiah did the right thing.

He went to the house of God. You know it's interesting to me that people who have known the Lord and get into a difficult situation often times stay away from church. But if you get into some kind of trouble the church is where you ought to go.

Go there and receive the fellowship of your brothers and sisters in the Lord. Receive benefit from the preaching of your pastor. Isaiah did the right thing.

He went to church. Amen. Well, while he was waiting before the Lord, he begins to tell us his personal experience.

He said, I saw the Lord. My brethren, how much we need that fresh revelation from heaven. We need a new vision of God even as Isaiah saw him high and lifted up.

One of the terrible losses of our day is that we have lost that clear vision of God. Our professor in the previous class talked to us about how our minds become clouded. And there are many things that cloud our minds.

Our concepts of God are so low that it's no wonder that life is lived on such a low level. Dr. Tozer comments, it is impossible to keep our moral practices sound and our inward attitudes right while our idea

of God is erroneous or inadequate. As far as we know, at the time of Isaiah's vision, he was a good man.

If he had written the first five chapters leading up to chapter six, it would seem that he already is getting messages from heaven. But now in his time of urgency and emergency, he goes to the house of God where he wants to seek help. And in the temple of God he says, I saw also the Lord.

It reminds me of the apostle John on the isle of Patmos and he saw Christ. And John was not just a common man. He was in the inner circle of Christ's disciples.

It appears that he was the first of the disciples to believe after he looked into the empty tomb. He had a long and a faithful ministry. But now he finds himself a prisoner on the isle of Patmos.

And on the isle of Patmos, if you remember that story, John was in the spirit on the Lord's day. And all of a sudden he heard a great voice behind him. And he turned to see the source of that voice.

And when he turned there was the glorified Christ. And this mighty John falls at his feet in worship. Do you mind if I talk to you about my feeling about worship? It's my personal conviction that the true worship of God is the most important thing we can do.

And it's not only the most important, it is the most unselfish thing we can do. Because true worship takes the attention away from me and puts it on Him. Worship is not about us.

Worship is about God. That's why the songs that we sing ought to be glorifying to Him, not making us feel good. Worship has nothing to do with how I feel.

But it has everything to do with who He is. When we put our attention on God, it takes the attention off of us. We stop worrying about my preaching.

We're not concerned about my witnessing. It's not my singing. It's not my work.

It's not my success or failure. But worship puts all of the attention on Jesus. And I say hallelujah.

You know, one of the things that Jesus tells us is that God is here seeking for someone. And you know who God is seeking? God is seeking those who worship Him in spirit and in truth. He's not looking for somebody who has a lot of money or who has no money.

He's not looking for the people who have pretty voices or voices that are not so pretty. He's not looking for how we come to church dressed. What He is looking for is someone who comes and says, Lord, I want to worship You with all of my heart.

One more comment. We don't serve well unless we have worshiped well. That takes nothing away from what has been said about our service for Him.

Rather, it says, before we serve, let's worship. The lack of reverence and worship in many of our assemblies would say to me, we have lost the true presence of Christ. When Isaiah talks to us about what this revelation of God did to him, it is a revelation.

He doesn't talk about the fact that he is a prophet of God. He doesn't talk about the fact that he was a counselor to the king. But when he saw the brightness of God's glory, and when he saw the seraphim flying in the temple, he heard them crying, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of His glory. And when they cried, the holiness of God, the very post of the temple shook. And the divine presence filled the house.

Even as the glory of God filled the tabernacle in the wilderness, and as the glory of God filled the temple on the day that Solomon dedicated it, and I want you to see what happened when Isaiah saw this vision of God. His response was to pray. And it is an important prayer.

And this is what he said, Woe is me, for I am undone. And the reason why he is distressed in his soul is because the light has shined into the deepest part of his life. It was a revelation that went beyond his position as a prophet.

And it revealed to him the deep need of his heart, and he said, Woe is me. But I like what happens next. The Bible says that a seraphim went to Isaiah with fire from off the altar of God.

And that fire did touch his lips. But what he says about it is this. He says that the fire from off the altar has taken away his iniquity and his sin is purged.

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe it is time for us to understand that God wants a clean, holy, pure people. Wherever uncleanness is found in our lives, remember its root is deeper than our lips. The real problem is not really what we're saying, but where it's coming from.

It's deeper than our hands, what we do. And it's deeper than our feet, where we go. There is an inner need that only the fire of God can cleanse.

From this story, God would tell us, those of us who are preachers, that he does not want us speaking through unclean lips. Those unclean lips are simply an indicator of a deep heart need that needs to be cleansed. But if we will allow him, God will take a fire from off the altar of God and will meet our personal heart need.

The life of holiness, the life of holiness and purity and cleansing is of such importance that Jesus says, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. And the Holy Spirit speaks through the writer to the book of Hebrews when he says that without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. The psalmist expresses the same thing.

And he asks the question, who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands. He that hath a pure heart. That's the person who sees God.

And one more time I want to say hallelujah. Some reference was made to the revival in the Hebrides islands of about 60 years ago. There were two older sisters, widows living together.

And they became concerned because the movie house was full. And the places of entertainment were full. And the house of God was empty.

Does it ever bother us that many times the places of worldly entertainment are jammed with people while many times our churches are nearly empty? So these two sisters began to pray that God would send revival to their island. And their faith kept rising and rising and rising. Until one day they actually challenged God.

And they said, Lord, you promised us that if we are thirsty, you would send water upon us. And Lord, we are dry. We're thirsty.

Lord, you promised that you would send water upon the dry ground. Lord, we're expecting you to respond to your promise. Finally, their prayers began to touch a small group of men.

And those men began to pray for revival. And three nights a week they went out to an old shed out in the country. And for a number of months they prayed three times a week.

And one night a young man stood up in that group of men who were praying. And he said, brethren, this is foolishness. Here we've been praying all these months and nothing is happening.

And he read the words from Psalm 24 that I mentioned a moment ago. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands. And he said to the brethren, are our hands clean? Are our hearts pure? What happened out of that is the following.

God began to break their hearts. And they recognized that there had been hard feelings between them. And brother con brother began to go and ask forgiveness.

And you say, but Brother Sankey, that's humbling. Indeed it is. But I want to tell you something.

God pays attention to the humble heart. You remember what David says over in Psalm 51 in verse 17, when he makes this comment that the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou will not despise. And so these men began to confess and ask each other forgiveness.

And the power of God fell on that little group of men. Then they left that meeting and went into town. And the bar, the saloon was empty.

And the movie house was empty. And you know where the men were? They were out in the street kneeling, asking God to forgive them of their sins. Ladies and gentlemen, the revival didn't start in the bar room.

The revival started out in the shed where God's people humbled themselves and prayed and sought the face of God. And God responded to their prayer. And God said, I want to ask forgiveness.

You say, Brother Sankey, all right, you talk to us. How does God cleanse us? If he wants a holy people, what does he do to cleanse us? Just this morning I was reading in the book of Ephesians. And it's in chapter 5 and about verse 25.

And this is what it says, that Christ also loved the church. We know that God loves the world. But here Paul says that Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it.

That he might sanctify it and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. That he might present it to himself a glorious church.

Now just this morning I read that that expression, glorious church, means that this church is brilliant in purity. And if you ask men, don't you want to have a pure church? Then it starts with pure people in the church. There's reference been made to Malachi chapter 3. And in that chapter 3 of the book of Malachi, God tells about the coming Messiah.

And the Messiah will sit as a refiner of fire, a refiner of silver. And they tell me that to refine silver you have to get plenty of fire underneath the pot where it's being melted. And as the fire begins to melt the silver, the impurity is there, begins to rise to the top.

And then the refiner takes an instrument, he takes off that corruption from inside and throws it away. And he keeps the fire underneath. And the impurities continue to rise to the top.

And he continues to scrape it off and throw it away. And they tell me that the ultimate goal of the refiner of silver is this. When he can look into the pot of silver and see his face reflected, he knows the silver is pure.

And you know what God wants to do with us? God wants to put the fire underneath us. And he wants that fire to bring out the corruption and the evil on the inside. And then he scrapes it off and throws it away.

And the whole objective is it so that one time he can look into that pot of silver and he can see his own image. You know God's greatest desire for us is not that we be happy. I think God's people are the happiest people in the world.

But that's not really the issue. What we really need is for God to make us holy. I suppose you could be unhappy and go to heaven, but you can't be unholy and go to heaven.

And so Christ gave himself that he might sanctify and cleanse his church. And so Christ is our great refiner of silver. But the word also is a cleansing agent.

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his ways by taking heed thereto according to thy word. And Jesus said, now you are clean through the word which I have given unto you. So when Paul says give attention to reading, we ought to listen.

Because the word of God read and received and obeyed and loved brings cleaning and cleansing to our heart. But let's not miss this point. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

He cleanses us from all sin. I know nothing about this crowd. You all look good to me.

Even though it would help some of you if you would smile. But there may be someone here who says, but Pastor Sankey, I have a need that is so deep. But remember the blood of Jesus Christ goes deeper than the stain of sin has gone.

And God himself is a cleansing agent. We read in 1 John that he is faithful and just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The Holy Spirit is a consuming fire.

And when Peter talks in Acts chapter 15 about what happened on the day of Pentecost. He says that God gave them the Holy Ghost. And when they received the Holy Ghost their hearts were purified by faith.

And when they received the Holy Ghost their hearts were purified by faith. Let me close with one other point. I wish I would have before me the definition that the professor gave us this morning about love.

Such a beautiful, beautiful picture it was. Love is a cleansing agent. When the love of God fills our heart it pushes out every other love.

The love of God filling our hearts pushes out the God of disobedience. Because Jesus said if you love me, keep my commandments. I am so thankful this morning that the love of God is a cleansing agent.

I'm not the only one here who travels away from home. But I know this that when I travel I want to make sure that my heart is filled with love for this lady right here. Because if you love your husband like you should it pushes out the love of any other man.

And if you love your wife like you should it pushes out the love of any other woman. One of the things we need to be asking God to do is to cleanse our hearts and then fill us with a baptism of love. Well, are you interested in holiness? You better be.

Because if you're not, you're not going to heaven. If you're not, you're not going to see the Lord. All my friends, I thank God this morning that holiness is something that God wants for us and has designed for us.

It is his highest purpose for our lives. When pure love is the motivation of our hearts and again our professor this morning dealt with this area of love or the area of motivation. We need to have pure love in our hearts so that our motivation is pure and holy.

Our minds fail us sometimes. But we can have a heart that is pure and a motive that is pure. And Paul speaks about that in 1 Corinthians 13.

And I wish that you would join me in a prayer right now. And if I have spoken to somebody this morning and you find in your heart a hunger for holiness let me just tell you that right now you can open your heart and allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse your heart. Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, we thank you. We thank you that you are a holy God. And we thank you that you make it possible for us to be holy people.

It's not a matter of our work, it's a matter of God's work in us. As our brother mentioned on Sunday, we thank you that there is a rest to the people of God. And we come into that rest when we stop working ourselves and allow God to do the work in our hearts.

And I pray now that your holy presence will descend upon this auditorium. Draw us close to yourself. Fill us with that divine love.

And may we live a life that is holy and pleasing to you. We ask this in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

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