

Survival in a Sin Sick Society

by Ralph Sexton

Ralph Sexton's sermon emphasizes the importance of relying on the Holy Spirit for comfort and guidance in navigating a challenging, sin-sick society.

Duration: 29:12

Scripture: Matthew 22:37-40, John 13:34-35, John 14:1-3, John 14:15, John 14:21

Topics: "Christian Discipleship", "Overcoming Adversity"

Description

In this sermon, the pastor emphasizes the importance of discipleship within the church. He acknowledges his own weaknesses and insignificance, but recognizes that through justification and being born again, he has been set apart to teach the Word of God. The pastor discusses the challenges of living in a sin-sick society, where violence, cruelty, and immorality are prevalent. He uses the story of Derek Redman, an Olympic athlete who suffered a hamstring injury during a race, to illustrate the need for encouragement and perseverance in the face of trials. The pastor concludes by highlighting the importance of not allowing the negative aspects of the world to overshadow the beauty and blessings that God has provided.

Transcript

John chapter 14, verse number 1. Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions.

If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will, what? Come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be.

I like that part also. Don't you love that? That's comfort for all of us in the Word of God. For the sake of time, while you're in John, I hope you'll read the whole chapter in your personal devotions, would you move forward to the 15th verse? John 14, verse 15.

If you love me, do what? Keep my commandments. Now, the commandments we know are the Ten Commandments, but we also know that when Jesus was teaching, He was giving examples over and over, out of the mouth of the Lord. You look at John 13, if you have a red-letter Bible, you're going to see a lot of red letters in there.

Jesus is talking. John 14, John 15, John 16, John 17, and some verses in John 18 are out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ. And He's teaching us, and He said, if you love me, if you really call me Lord, then

do what I'm asking you to do.

Because there's a lot of things in our life. Well, the Lord gave me this thought. Survival in a sin-sick society.

I've been overwhelmed. For a couple of days, I just didn't even watch the news. It seemed like every time I turned it on, it was an Amber Alert, and those tear me up.

I can't take those. And then the cruelty, and the violence, and the unbelievable sickness that we have, men treating other human beings on this earth. And then there's wars, and rumors of wars.

And your head almost spins, and you wonder, how are we going to survive in this sin-sick society? How can we walk through this? And I don't know if you've noticed or not, but you can just sometimes turn on the radio, turn on the television, be in the mall, be in a restaurant, be in the grocery store, and two or three aisles over, someone's using every filthy four-letter word that you... You know, you can't even imagine they're saying that in public. We used to at least be respectful of women and children. And you turn around now, and it's a woman and a child doing it.

That's how sick our society has gotten, and the culture. And how are we going to survive in this? How are we going to keep from being overwhelmed with the things that we're facing? In John chapters 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17, sometimes Bible scholars or theologians will discuss this passage, and they call it the Last Supper discourse. It's the conversation that Jesus was having with the disciples before He went to heaven.

And He knew what was coming. He's God Almighty. He knew that they were going to celebrate the Passover.

He knew that the next day He would be arrested while He's in the Garden of Gethsemane praying. And He also knew He was on the way to the crucifixion. He knew He was going to be God's Lamb offered as a sacrifice for your sin and my sins.

So what He's doing, He's talking to these guys, and He's trying to encourage them. Now, I'm not going to be here tomorrow night. I'm not going to be here a week from tomorrow night.

You're going to have to walk in this old sin-cursed world without the Messiah walking beside you. So Jesus, the rabbi, the great teacher that He was, He's instructing them how you can do it after I'm gone. How you can survive.

And I think the application is for me as well as for those disciples. And we're living in a spinning world of sin and temptation, wickedness and materialism, violence and cruelty. And it's hard if we're not careful.

All of those ugly things cloud the beauty of the wonderful things. You miss the flowers and the birds and your children and your grandchildren and the happiness of having a family meal and watching a ball game together. But if you're not careful, all of the ugliness will cloud the beauty and you'll miss the beauty of your marriage, your family, your children and the things that you ought to be enjoying every single day.

And how can I possibly survive, pastor? You say, how can I go to work? How can I live? How can I go to school, the university? How can I love my husband, my wife, my children, my parents, my friends? And how can I walk in this world and still be faithful to the Lord? Look with me here in St. John 14 and begin

with verse number 15. If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another what? Comforter.

And in your Bible, that word comforter is a capital. It is a person. Notice this, that He may abide with you for a few days, a few hours, a few weeks, till you get in a real bind, till you're scared, forever.

He said, I will abide with you forever. Look at verse 17. Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive.

Now, when it says the world, it's not talking about the mud ball earth. It's talking about the world system, world religion, world political, the geopolitical world, the economic kingdom. They're not going to receive the Holy Spirit of God.

They look at you like you've fallen off a truckload of wagon, or some kind of ride into town with a country bumpkin and a load of pumpkins. I don't know. But they just wonder, what on earth are you talking about when you're talking about I'm a spiritual person, I'm a spiritual being? And that verse says the world, and in the Greek, in the original language of the Bible, it's referring to a world system.

And that's what we're living in. Sometimes you're walking around thinking, you know what, I just don't feel at home here. Well, you're not home here.

Your home's in heaven. We're just pilgrims passing through. And every now and then you'll get homesick because you want to see the Lord and you want to be with Him.

And notice this. When you see this verse, it says, the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not. They can't believe because they can't see.

But you believe because it's no problem for you to believe it because why? You enjoy Him on the inside. You know the change. Neither knoweth Him, but ye know Him.

That's what I just said. For what? He dwelleth with you and shall be in you. Verse 18.

I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you. Have you ever just been overwhelmed and think, man, I can't do this.

I can't do this. I read the story. It's a baseball story.

I love sports stories. It's about a rookie who faced the old pitcher, Walter Johnson, for the first time. And Walter Johnson was just a big raw bone throw heat.

I mean, that's all. He just melted hot off the ball down the middle. And this rookie walked out and he sat up and dug his spikes in.

He got ready. He got loaded up. And Walter's on the mound.

And this rookie's having to face this famous pitcher for the first time. And Jerry got ready. You know, he's getting ready.

And all of a sudden that heat comes in and pow. And he couldn't even cock his arm to swing. And the ball's in the glove.

And the catcher throws it back to Walter. Walter loads up again. He's winding up the throw.

And what he does, that rookie, he's like, I'll get it this time. And he sat up, got ready, and hit the glove. And he just turned around and looked at the umpire, threw his bat down.

He said, you can keep that third strike. I've seen enough. He wasn't even going to wait for him to throw the next one.

Sometimes that's how you feel. I've got two strikes. I'm headed to the dugout.

I don't have to see any more. Well, hey, church, have you ever felt that way? Have you ever felt like that, rookie? Jesus promised, I will not leave you comfortless. He promised no matter what the situation, He will hear your prayer, and He will take care of you, and He will deliver you.

How can we make it through this old sin-weary world? With its temptation, its fear, its sickness, its anxiety, its panic, its depression, its death, its separation, its crime. How are we going to get through all of this? The materialism of today for our children and grandchildren is an unbelievable temptation. Verse 18 of John 14 says, I will not leave you comfortless.

Now, if I read that verse in the Greek New Testament, you know what you find out, Josh? That word comfortless there says that Jesus was talking to those disciples. Now, He said, now boys, I'm leaving. I know some of you aren't connecting the dots, but I'm not going to be here for supper tomorrow night.

But I want you to know that I'm not going to leave you, and if we had been in that room, Jesus would have said this, I'm not going to leave you like an orphan. That's the word in the Greek. I'm not going to leave you orphans.

I'm not going to leave you comfortless. It translates into our King James Bible. But in the original language of that day, He would have been looking at them and He would have said, I'm not going to leave you like a bunch of orphans.

How is it that you can be a grown adult and be 40, 50 years old and go to the cemetery and bury your mom or your dad and walk out of there and feel like you're an orphan six years old on the side of the road? How is it that you can feel that way? Well, one reason is we're human beings. And God made that love connection great between moms and dads and children. And that's why you can be at a cemetery and bury your mother and your father and have you weeping because you have that emotion or that sensation, even though you're grown.

You've got your family. You've got maybe even children and grandchildren. And yet you can feel like an orphan because you went and buried mama.

You buried daddy. I won't ever forget that day in the cemetery. I'm preaching the funeral for that little lady, 109 years old.

And I'm standing there and this man comes around through the tombstones and he's crying and he's barely walking, all bent over. And there's a little old gray-haired lady comes up to me. And they both got to me about the same time and said, are you Preacher Ralph? And I said, yes.

And they said, are you going to preach mama's funeral? And that was their daughter and their son. And they're barely going. He was almost 90 and she was 80-something.

And they were crying. They felt like an orphan. And I thought, my, that's in us.

That's in us. And so Jesus connected to that. He said, mama, you may have gone to the cemetery and left papi over there, but he said, when you go to the house and you're all by yourself, you're not an orphan.

Holy Spirit, I'll not leave you comfortless. Be a single parent. Today's crazy work.

Try to raise those babies by yourself. The terror of the night. Am I doing it right? Take the blended families that we've got today.

Her kids and his kids and our kids and all the stress and all the problems. How are we going to get through this? What are we doing? And you're thinking, how can I survive? What God said in this blessed book, he said, you can get through here. You can survive.

You say, but Pastor, my life's a disaster. I've messed up. I've done everything wrong.

I've gone back on what I know. I've gotten involved with alcohol. I've gotten involved with drugs.

I've gotten messed up with the law. I've disappointed my family. I've broken my mother, my dad's heart.

My wife, my husband thinks I'm just a hypocrite because I've messed up so many times. How can you tell me I'm going to make it? I can tell you today, if you'll bend that knee and say, God, be merciful, unto me a sinner, I'm sorry, I'm a prodigal. You can come up out of that altar and say, from this day forward, I'm going to walk my faith in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he said, I will walk beside you. I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you.

I will be your friend, your comforter. You will not be an orphan in this crazy world. What a God.

What a Savior. He's a God of provision. And listen, when we go through this, look at verse 17.

Look at verse 17. Look what the book says. Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him, but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be where? In you.

Now, didn't I tell you the other day the Bible is its best commentary on itself? Alright? Verse 17, Spirit of truth. What does that mean? Verse 26 tells you what 17 is about. But the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost.

See, there's your explanation. The comforter. What comforter? The comforter of verse 17.

The Spirit of truth. The comforter of verse 18. The comforter in verse 26, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name.

He shall teach you all things. One of the sobering responsibilities of the pastor is that we need to be a church of discipleship. That people need to study the Word of God and know the Word of God.

And I realize how weak and insignificant I am to teach you the Word of God. Now, boy, one night, it was up in the wee hours of the morning, two or three o'clock in the morning, and I was thinking about how overwhelmed I am. I'm just a little old piece of clay that should have already been consumed for my own wickedness.

But instead of getting and receiving justice, I got justified. I've been born again. I'm into the family of God.

And now, not only did He save me, but He set me aside to say, will you tell people about my grace and about my mercy? And I say, but how can I do that? He said, you just present it, and I'll send the Holy Spirit. And He shall teach them. See, if you're hungry, what was it Jay said the other day about looking for his car keys? Yeah, you know, he lost his car keys.

And lose your car keys. Just lose your pocketbook in Mexico. Yeah.

Be in Israel and lose your passport. Know when you're getting ready to go through those, and watch them tear everything up. Go looking for it.

And Jesus said, if you'll seek Me like you seek your car keys, if you'll seek Me like you seek your purse, if you'll seek Me like you do for your passport when you've lost it, He said, if you'll seek Me, you can find Me. If you'll call upon Me, I'll hear you. It's just whether or not you want to get intense enough to do business with Him.

That's why God blessed you watching a ballgame last night. Michigan State didn't make God nervous. He knew they were going to lose.

And God got in your living room anyway. And He said, there's my little lamb. He said, He's over there at Trinity, pastoring, loving on sheep.

He's got Him trying to build His house. He's got a wife who's going to have a baby. He's as scared as I am.

And here He comes. He knows that I am just a man. The pastor is just a man.

Mark's just a man. Jay's just a man. Alan's just a man.

Jerry's just a man. And now you come in there and you're with all these guys. And what are we going to do? And Jesus said, well, I'm going to teach them real quick because we're about out of town.

So I'm just going to send the Holy Ghost to you real quick. Comes in there in the middle of your ballgame. Messed up your game.

And started hugging on you and kissing on you and letting you know, I'll be there with you. One day Ralph may not be there. Jerry may be out.

Alan may be injured. But Ricky, if you have to do it. You understand that? Now, follow this with me for a moment and maybe it will help you understand it.

Jesus was here on earth 33 and a half years. Now He goes into the grave. Three days, three nights.

Good Wednesday. Gets up on Sunday morning and goes to see the Father. And takes His own blood.

Takes His own blood. And walks in and puts it on the altar of God on the Holy of Holies. And He said, God, when Ralph shows up, it's paid for.

Let him in. Hey, when Lauren gets over here, it's already paid for. Steve shows up.

Here it is. Here's the blood that I shed so George could go to heaven. Here it is, right here.

And by the way, He said, from this point forward, I was on earth visibly. And now I am visibly representing you in God. I am your advocate.

I will present your petition to the Father. I am your paraclete. I am your comforter.

I am the visible representative for you. Because the Father is in me. And I am in the Father.

And you are in me. And I am in you. Hallelujah.

Boy, we've got a representative, a counsel, a lawyer, an advocate in the Holy of Holies. What a God. What a Savior.

That will make an Episcopalian. Amen. You just rejoice in that.

Because of who you are and what you are. Now watch this. Jesus leaves.

He dies. Goes on the cross, resurrects, and goes to the Father. And He tells these guys before He leaves, verse 17, verse 18, John 14, verse 26, Now I'm gone, but I won't leave you comfortless.

So Jesus was the visible paraclete. He was the visible advocate. Now watch this.

He says, I want you to finish your race. I want you to be like the Apostle Paul. I've run my little race here on earth.

I've finished this course. I've kept the faith. Now the devil is working every day to try to get me to quit and to get you to quit.

Danny, every one of these babies, there's a target on their back. Because the devil wants every child. He desires their soul.

He desires them. He desires your husband. He desires your wife.

You talk about changing your prayer life. Talk about being faithful to the house of God. And you can run your race of faith for the Lord, but you've got to have some help.

And I can't do it on my own. Can you do it on your own? I've got to have the comforter. And I've got to teach my children and my grandchildren that He's available.

That this isn't Hollywood and this isn't fantasy. This is real. There really is a God.

There really is a heaven. There really is a help. And there really is help.

There's hope. I've determined by the help of the Lord that I want the next 30 years in the ministry to be the greatest for the Lord. Not for me, but for the Lord.

Because if I can go 30 more years, like I went these past 30 years, they went just like that. If I can go 30 more just like that and be wide open for Jesus, I'll only be 69. And bless God, I mean, that's not that old.

No. And just, do you remember Derrick Redmond? You remember Derrick Redmond who ran for Great Britain, the great athlete? At age 19, Derrick Redmond had already shattered the record for the 400 meter race. And in 1988, he was to represent Great Britain in the Olympic Games.

And he broke the record. And he was competing in the 1988 Olympics and went out of the starting blocks in that 400 meter. And just as he cranked up and got up to full speed, he felt something pop in his heel and popped a tendon.

And he had to fall down and come out of the race. And after that, Derrick Redmond had five different surgeries to repair his foot. Five different surgeries.

Doctors said he'd never run again. His Olympic hopes were over. Even though he was already a world record maker, it was over.

Just as quick as it started, it was over. But Derrick didn't give up. He kept working and in training.

1992, Summer Games, Barcelona, Spain. Guess who's representing Great Britain? Derrick Redmond. He's there.

He's already running in the 400. He's already been through the time trials. Sitting up in the stands is his daddy, Jim.

And Jim's got on a big t-shirt, ESPN. Remember, they covered the story and Jim had a t-shirt on. Said, have you hugged your foot today? Because he knew his boy's feet were blessed.

And for him to be through five surgeries, for him to be in the Olympics was a miracle itself. And there they go, the guns sounding and that big final heat running for the gold medal. Barcelona, Spain.

And Derrick Redmond takes off and he's running up through the traffic and all the crowd into the first turn, the second turn. And they're headed 175 yards from the finish line. And all of a sudden, Derrick hears a pop, just like a gunshot.

He falls lame, hits the track, and his right hamstring is popped. And there he lays, crying in pain. 175 feet from a gold medal.

The other runners now catch up with him and they run past him as he's writhing in pain there on that track. I believe Lewis from the United States won that heat that day. And won the gold.

And he's there. And he's thinking, I can see the finish line. I'm that close.

And I can't even run. And he got up and he tried to hobble and he fell down. And the medical personnel ran out.

His daddy's up in the stands. 65,000 screaming people are in that Olympic Stadium. Derrick's laying there on the track.

And his daddy's jumping down through bleachers, pushing people. And he's trying to get to the track. And obviously, you're not allowed to go on an Olympic Stadium track.

But his daddy didn't care. He got to the rail, leaped over the rail, down onto the track. And two security people tried to get his daddy.

And Jim said, that's my boy. He's hurt. I'm going to help him.

I'm going to go help my son. And he went running over to him. And old Derrick was crying.

And he said, Daddy, I don't want a DNF. I don't want it on my record. I don't want a DNF.

He said, Daddy, please help me up. Please help me up. And he helped him up.

And he said, I'm going to try to cross the line. And he started hopping on his one foot. And when he did, the crowd realized they weren't going to take him off the track.

They realized he wasn't quitting. And people started clapping. People started standing up.

And he's hobbling. And his daddy said, Hon, you just lean on me. You just lean on me.

We'll get there. Boy, and Derrick's crying. And he said, I don't want a DNF on my record.

That stands for did not finish. He said, I don't want a did not finish by my name, Dad. I don't want to look at a record book that says Derrick Redmond did not finish.

He said, I want to cross the finish line. And he said, lean on me, son. We'll go there together.

And they got right up to the finish line just a few feet away. And his daddy said, now, son, I'm going to turn you loose. You finish on your own.

You're right there. You can do it. And so he went and crossed the finish line.

Oh, yes, he did. There's no DNF by Derrick Redmond's name. And church, as your pastor, the humble servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, I don't want you to have a DNF by your name.

I know you're going through a battle. I know you're going through a hard place. It's hard to understand when your husband's being battled or your wife or your children or you're going through financial or physical problems.

But I tell you, you've got to help her today, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the comforter has come for this day and hour. You can't survive in a sin-sick world.

Jesus is here. Cast all your care upon him, for he cares for you. I don't want a DNF by my name.

I want to finish, don't you? And by God's help, we can.

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