

# Three Encouragements

by Richard Owen Roberts

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of fear as a motivator, the price Christ paid for our redemption, and God's great plan of salvation to encourage believers to live holy lives.*

**Duration:** 1:27:25

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 1:13-16, 1 Peter 1:22-25

**Topics:** "Encouragement"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on 1 Peter 1:13-16 and encourages the audience to gird up their minds for action, keep sober in spirit, and fix their hope completely on the grace to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ. The preacher poses the question of how well Peter, as described in the Gospels, fulfilled these commands. The preacher acknowledges that Peter, despite his failures, was loved by God and used by Him. The sermon also highlights the importance of maintaining holiness and not succumbing to former lusts. The preacher references Moses' loss of temper as an example of the vulnerability we face after experiencing seasons of God's presence.

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## Transcript

First Peter, chapter one, we'll read again that wonderful chapter. Last night, if you remember, Mr. Roberts pointed out 12 things that lift up our countenance. And then five commands that flow out of that type of hopeful life.

And tonight we look at the three proddings, correct? OK. First Peter, chapter one. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to the pilgrims of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in sanctification of the spirit for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, grace to you and peace be multiplied.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. In this, you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials that the genuineness of your faith being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom, having not seen you love, though now you do not see him, yet believing you rejoice with joy, inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your

faith, the salvation of your souls. Of this salvation, the prophets have inquired and searched carefully who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what or what manner of time the spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow to them.

It was revealed that not to themselves, but to us. They were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things which angels desire to look into. Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lust as in your ignorance, but as he who called you as holy.

You also be holy in all your conduct because it is written, Be holy for I am holy. And if you call on the father who, without partiality, judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear, knowing that you are not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through him believe in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and hope are in God.

Since you have purified your souls and obeying the truth through the spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart. Having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible through the word of God, which lives and abides forever because all flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass, the grass withers and its flower falls away. But the word of the Lord endures forever.

Now, this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you. May God add his blessing. To the reading of his word, we're going to pray and then we'll sing again and then Mr. Roberts will come and speak to us once more from this passage.

So let's turn our hearts and fix them upon our Lord. Let's pray. Our great God, we thank you for the things that Peter writes.

Because, God, we do know that Peter said that we have like precious faith and the things that he writes to a people two thousand years ago under the heavy cloud of persecution are the same things that we woke up this morning, surrounded by the great realities of Christ, the reality of his redemptive labors, which none could do but him, your son and our kinsman, the reality of the work of the spirit, bringing the gospel to those who were far off, those who are without you and without hope in this world. God, we were your enemies. Our minds were clouded by sin.

We believed the lie of sin every time. The thousandth time, God, we believed sin's lies rather than to believe you, you who have never told us anything untrue. Our hearts, God, loved, loved sin, loved self.

We didn't see anything beautiful in the gospel. We didn't see anything beautiful in holiness. We didn't see anything beautiful in obedience.

We didn't see anything beautiful in becoming the love slave of Jesus of Nazareth, becoming servants of a great king. And God, our wills were chained. We feel like a lame man watching everything that's hopeful

and beautiful pass by.

And we, God, we don't run to it. But God, you have not left us where we were. You have sent your spirit in the book of Acts.

We see the great dam of mercy burst, an undeserved favor poured across this tiny globe. And we, two thousand years later. Some from Korea, some China.

Lord, some from Wales, some from America, all of us outside of you brought in, united to Christ forever. Lord, we thank you. We add our gratitude to the words that we read here.

We thank you, God, for giving us a thing that angels long to look into. We thank you for making us alive. We thank you for choosing us, God, for drawing us to yourself.

We thank you, Lord, for all the things that were mentioned last night. God, we thank you that in all of these. The precious things of Christ, the treasury of our king, that these are imperishable.

That you have laid up for us more than mind can imagine, and you have promised to protect us until the day that all that fullness is experienced with no sin between us and you. But God, until that day, we agree that all flesh is like grass, the flower of the grass, Lord, the best of us. We wither and perish, God, but you remain and your glory and your name will endure forever and ever untarnished, and you will get all the glory due to your name.

So, Father, we pray that tonight. That how we respond to your word, how it's preached, how it's listened to by children and grandparents and how we live when we get in the car and drive home. God, we pray that that might be one.

One very real, though small part of the unfolding of your glory, God, be pleased with how we respond to you tonight and give us all we need to do all your good pleasure. Give us courage, God, and entice us forward. Do not leave us as you find us, and we ask it for the glory of our Lord.

Amen. Well, let's get our Bibles ready at that wonderful first chapter of Peter. As Pastor John has indicated in our look last evening, we focused on the 12 things that I have described as countenance lifters, those 12 wonderful things accomplished on our behalf by the Lord Jesus Christ, and our focus was upon those five specific commands.

Let's begin by looking at them and then let me put a question to you concerning them. This is verses 13, 14, 15, and 16, five matters. Number one, gird up your minds for action.

Number two, keep sober in spirit. Number three, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Number four, as obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance.

And number five, like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior, because it is written, you shall be holy as I am holy. Now, here's the question. How well did Peter do? Would you describe the Peter of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as a man girded for action? Would you describe him as sober? Does he look to you during those years walking with Christ? Does he look like somebody who had fixed his hope completely? On the grace to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ? Does he in any way appear as somebody who was no longer in the grip of the former lusts? Would you describe

Peter as holy, just as Christ was holy, as the character said before us in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? It's almost difficult to imagine any more colossal failure than Peter, but thank God an obvious change occurred.

Is it not easy to see that radical difference in the book of Acts? If someone thinking of these five commands is feeling, well, I realize it's part of the Bible. They are commands God has given, but there's not really any hope for me. I think there's a lot of wisdom in observing the incredible change that occurred in Peter.

Now, if Peter had become absolutely perfect, then we would be defeated again from a different angle. But in that, even after the glorious change that occurred to him, he was still a man and still capable of failure. We have the encouragement of the change, and we have the encouragement that even as a man who did on occasion fail, he was loved of God and wonderfully healed.

Now, after the twelve countenance lifters and the five commands, as I said last night, we have three statements of immense value that can truly, wonderfully help us in actually setting our minds and hearts to fulfill these commands. It's three wonderful encouragements, if you will, or three things that behind us sort of form a big push and help us to move onward in these matters. And let me give you the three, and then let's take them up with some care one by one.

Verse 17, if you address as father the one who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth. Now, there can be immense power in fear, but anybody in his right mind who's given careful consideration to this knows that greed is a greater motivator than fear. The nature of fear is that it does not last indefinitely in most instances, but greed lasts much longer.

My word, you doubtless know someone personally whose whole life is so wrapped up in greed and in the accumulation of goods and delight. I mean, we have the story of the miser counting his gold and all kinds of indications of that. But greed never leads anywhere worth going.

It always ends up in tragedy. So while it has huge power, that power is not consequential, but obviously far greater than either fear or greed is love. And these next two statements really help us to focus on the issue of love and to truly be motivated.

So while the first prod is fear, the second prod is the price that Christ paid. And look at these wonderfully important words. Verse 18, knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life, but inherited from your forefathers, bought with the precious blood as of a lamb, unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

So fear, the cost, the price that Christ himself paid. And number three, the magnitude of what God had planned from the beginning and has held in place throughout the centuries and will be forever in place. God's incredibly great plan of salvation.

Notice how it's worded here. Verses 20 and 21. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you, who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and hope are in God.

Oh, what a wonderful, wonderful thing God has done. So that's where we will focus this evening, those five verses. Tomorrow night, Lord willing, we'll deal with the last four verses of this passage.

And for those of you who like to prepare yourself, may I suggest that you give some consideration in advance of tomorrow night of what is said here about perishable seed and imperishable seed. If you have time and opportunity, meditate upon that. Let me read it again just to help to fix it in your mind.

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again, not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable, that is through the living and abiding word of God. For all flesh is like grass, all of its glory like the flower of the grass. The grass withers, the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord abides forever.

And this is the word that was preached to you. All right, the three prods, the motivators, things that can help us wonderfully to truly obey these five commands. And indeed, all else that God commands of us.

Here, hardly the most popular subject in the church. And indeed, if I manage by God's grace to live a bit longer, I'll not forget any more than I've forgotten in the past. That church in the town of Wheaton where I live that asked me to come three Sundays in a row during the summer when the travel schedule was lighter.

And after a lot of prayer and consideration, wondering and praying over what to preach on, it seemed appropriate to preach on the fear of God. I think maybe I reported this one time here and some of you with sharp memory may well remember. I took three texts which form three of the great issues in the fear of God.

Number one, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Now, I won't speak very bluntly. We have a very well-educated president who could not be described as stupid.

But he could be described as grossly unwise because he has no fear of the Lord. And most of our politicians have no fear of the Lord. And listen, young people, I don't think I ever knew a young person who started out saying, I am going to prove myself to be one of the greatest idiots that ever lived.

I am determined to do more foolish and absolutely stupid things than anybody else on earth. No, when we determine to go our own way, it's not because we determine to be foolish. It's because we don't know that if we go our own way, that's exactly what we will be, foolish.

Without the fear of God, there is no hope of wisdom. Most of us have heard that, but not everybody has really taken that to heart. So the fear of God is truly the source of wisdom.

Number two, the fear of God is the only true deterrent of evil. You can set your heart to avoid sinning. But you won't succeed.

You don't have what it takes to do so. No person has the ability on their own, through the resolution of their own mind, to rise above evil. But the fear of God is an incredible deterrent to evil.

As you walk in the fear of God, you'll find yourself wonderfully helped in the issue of holiness, which was that fifth command here in 1 Peter 1. But number three, and this is particularly clear in the book of Nehemiah, especially chapter 5. The only guarantee of social justice is the fear of God. That is why the Bible makes it absolutely clear, no man should serve in the position of judge who does not fear God. And that's why the fathers of this nation were so keen to see that the whole of the judicial system was in the hands of men who fear God.

Now, of course, we've wandered so far from that, but justice is a joke. If you were falsely arrested for a crime you did not commit, how great is the hope of justice? Well, it depends on how much money you have and how many prestigious friends. Justice, by and large, these days, has nothing to do with guilt or innocence, but cleverness and clout.

Oh, to live again in the land where the fear of God is so powerful that there is a guarantee of justice. But I mentioned that this church in our city had asked me to speak for three Sundays. Those were the three issues that I spoke about.

And do you know what the reaction of the church was? We don't believe in a God that you have to fear. There was an elderly man in the church. It was mostly made up of younger people, the congregation, that is.

But this older man made the habit of coming by my office maybe once a year. And every time he came, he would say, Mr. Roberts, do you happen to remember that time you spoke three Sundays in a row in our church? Oh, yes, I remember. He said, do you realize that every time your name comes up, those people fly into a rage? I said that fear of God is not the most popular subject in the world.

And by and large, you won't hear very much about it. But tonight, let's think seriously about it. And notice the wording now of verse 17.

If you address as father the one who impartially judges according to each man's word. Now, is that implying that God's impartiality in judgment is only of those who call him father? No, of course not. The very nature of God is that he is just.

That's why the court system is so corrupt today, because the judges are lacking in justice. They don't know truly what justice is in multitudes of cases. But we want to face the reality that if we are believers, there is still an accountability.

Surely it is different than the accountability of unbelievers, but there's no denying that indeed there will be a hearing and we will be confronted with our lives and our works. He judges every man's work. But here is the line that we are particularly concerned about tonight.

Conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth. During the time of your stay upon earth. Some of you know that I spent quite a while in London at one period a long time ago and regularly attended services at Westminster Chapel where Martin Lloyd Jones was preaching.

And it seemed invariable that in the pastoral prayer, he would call upon the Lord in the most powerful and moving way. But he always seemed to include this line. During the days of our earthly pilgrimage.

Now that's what this passage is talking about. During your stay on earth. In short, every day of our lives.

We are to concern ourselves with the fact that we are being held accountable and therefore we must conduct ourselves in fear. Now I want to put this to you in the form of a question. Do you conduct yourself daily in fear? Do you conduct yourselves in all ways mindful of the fact that you are going to have to give an accounting? Believe it or not, I was young once.

And I remember thinking, well, if nobody's looking. Thank you for your patience. This doesn't normally happen, but we take life as it comes, don't we? When I was young, I somehow for a little while had the

notion, if nobody was looking, then maybe it would be safe.

But it wasn't too long before I realized that there wasn't any place you could go where God was not looking. No mountain you could climb, no depth of the sea that you could enter, no cave in which you could hide, where God did not truly see all. Now in this passage is also a very clear statement about the duration of this fear.

During the entire time of your earthly sojourn, during your stay upon earth, conduct yourselves in fear. Now let's think of a few of the things that we have reason to be fearful concerning. If you are a believer, you're not fearful, I hope, about having to pay for your own sin.

Well, what would the gospel mean if one still had to pay for their sin? I was telling someone this week, a dear, dear man in our area, married late in life. He was in his forties when he married for the first time. And I don't know whether he really understood when he married or not, but I think he had been told, but I don't think he really understood.

He married a woman with epilepsy. And they had hardly been married any time at all before she began to have these epileptic seizures. And they kept getting worse and worse.

And they had hardly been married two years when somebody told them that the doctor in the Chicago area had come up with a brain surgery that would greatly reverse this problem of seizures. And so this woman had brain surgery. And unfortunately, if they had consulted a second doctor, they wouldn't have done it because it didn't work.

And she became almost a vegetable. A little more than that, but in terrible, terrible shape. Well, quite recently, he came to see me one afternoon.

And I know him well and knew he was hurting badly. And this is what he said to me. Well, I don't honestly see how we can keep on.

He said, I haven't had a night's sleep for weeks. She wakes me up every 30 minutes or so, insisting she has to go to the bathroom. I just barely get back to bed and to sleep, and she's insisting again.

He gave me a deal. Then he said to me, well, I have to admit, I deserve it. I deserve it.

I've never been a good man. So I said to him, in your mind then, God is like a crook? He said, what do you mean? You have told me yourself that you believed Christ paid for your sin in full. But now you're telling me that he's charging you a second time.

He said, I'm rather stunned. Oh, he said, thank you. That's exactly what I needed to hear.

And he's been brighter since. And all of us have got to face the reality, Christ paid in full. But still, there are grounds for fear.

Not fear, as I've just tried to say, that we will have to pay for what Christ paid for. But other fears are very considerable consequences. If you are a true believer, are you not in the grip of the fear that you may degrade God in front of others so that they get totally the wrong picture of God? I believe that's part of what our dear friend and brother John Snyder sought to accomplish in this Behold Your God work he's been engaged in.

God has been badly degraded by multitudes of professed Christians. And none of us can dare who claim Christ is our Savior to live in the fashion that degrades the gospel that we love. Live in fear that that will never happen.

Live in fear that you may violate the very mercy that Christ is extending to you personally. Live in fear that you may be missing opportunities of doing good and sharing Christ with others. But whenever I think of these words, I think of that account you mostly know well.

That account of Moses. At the end, 120 years of age. At the waters of Meribah.

Numbers 20, when the people are muttering and complaining and making life miserable for him. And he and his brother Aaron have an incredible experience in which God reveals himself to them and they fall on their faces before the Lord. Like a mountaintop experience.

Did you ever have one of those experiences that we refer to as mountaintop? I think I told some of you once about the time when my dear Maggie was with me. You know she's really with me. But this time she was with me in Colorado in an eight-day meeting.

And the first day it looked impossible. And as we left the church, I turned to her and said, Maggie, I think I made a mistake in accepting this invitation. These people are weary of me.

And Monday was tough. Tuesday was tough. Wednesday was tough except the man seemed to be expressing a little conviction of sin but acting like a hypocrite in doing so.

Anyway, a bad week. Until the second Sunday when the pastor spoke first to the joint classes, all the adults and the young people. And then he said, this was about 930 in the morning, he said, Mr. Roberts will speak in a few minutes.

But before he does, is there anybody here with a great burden that you want prayer concerning? The man stood in the front and burst into tears. It was very difficult to understand what he said, but as near as I know, what he said was, someone came into my shop this week in desperate need and I failed completely to help that person. Would you please pray for him and pray for me? My wife was sitting next to me on my right.

I took my elbow and jabbed her. She looked startled and I whispered, he has come. She looked at me strange.

Who? I said, he has come. I heard you, but who? I said, the Lord. And he had one of those incredible days when the manifest presence of Christ filled the place and vast numbers of people weeping, got right with God and one another.

We were there till six in the evening without any break. And then a few minutes for a quick pit stop and back again till near ten. We flew home the next day, picked up our car at the airport, drove into our yard, and as we were opening the door to our home, either Maggie said something nasty to me or I said something nasty to her or maybe both of us said something nasty.

And in a moment's time, we were acting like cats and dogs fighting. And then suddenly, we came to our senses. Isn't that just like Satan? You come down off the mountaintop and you are vulnerable.

Every one of us is vulnerable when we have these incredible seasons of God's gracious presence in our lives. Our vulnerability is very real. We must live in fear.

And poor Moses loses his temper. When God says, speak to the rock, he takes the rod and wallops the rock. Now the water came for him, but it was necessary for the Lord to say to Moses, because you did not maintain my holiness before the people, you make it mandatory for me to maintain it at your expense.

Go up on the mountain, look across and see the land of promise lie down and die. When you lose the fear of God, you don't lose salvation when you have an episode like Moses had. But you don't get to finish your life's work.

And I'd like to ask you now very gently and very kindly, which is more important to you, heaven or finishing the work that God has given you to do? When you have the fear of God, finishing your work, in keeping with the five commands of this passage, is of incredible importance. So I ask you very soberly, how well are you doing in terms of living in the fear of God during the days of your earthly soldier? Listen to all of these quotations out of Scripture. Deuteronomy 10.12 What does the Lord your God require from you? But to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him and serve him with all your heart and soul.

Deuteronomy 10.20 You shall fear the Lord your God, you shall serve him and cling to him. Deuteronomy 13.4 You shall follow the Lord your God and fear him, and you shall keep his commandments, listen to his voice, serve him and cling to him. Now you can't cling to God if you're walking in disobedience.

The Bible has an incredibly vast array of instruction on the subject of fearing the Lord. Joshua 24.14 Now therefore, fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and truth, putting away the gods which your fathers served. 1 Samuel 12.24 Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart.

Over and over and over and over the subject of fearing the Lord is brought to our attention. Let me give you just a little taste of the incredibly beautiful benefits of fearing the Lord. Most of you can't see this very well, but you see here I've got three sheets here.

And all I've got, I'll let you have a look just so if somebody asked if I was telling the truth, you can see. These are all just quotations with a heading that suggests what it is each quotation deals with. Let me just give you a taste of this.

I've already mentioned the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Psalm 111.10 Proverbs 1.7 Job 28.28 I mentioned that the fear of God is a deterrent to sin. Exodus 20.20 And Proverbs 16.6 By the fear of the Lord, one keeps away from evil.

Now listen, young people, if you don't fear the Lord, you're going to get caught up in evil. That's all there is to it. There are no two ways about it.

The fear of God is directly related to obedience. Deuteronomy 5.29 Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear me and keep all my commandments always. The fear of God is for our own good.

Deuteronomy 6.24 So the Lord commanded us to fear the Lord our God for our good always and for our survival. The fear of God brings his salvation nearer. Psalm 85.9 Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him.

Now listen, this is one I really love. And before I read it, I want to give a little statement here. Some of us have truly learned that the nearness of God is our good.

And listen to these wonderful words. Psalm 25.14 The secret of the Lord is for those who fear him. And that statement, secret of the Lord, speaks of intimacy.

I assure you, every one of you, without exception, your life will never be better at any time than when God is near. And you cannot anticipate, expect, and enjoy the nearness of God without fearing him. The fear of God brings a storehouse of goodness.

Psalm 31.19 How great is thy goodness which thou hast stored up for those who fear him. The fear of God assures God's attentive care in our lives. Psalm 33.18 Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him.

Can you imagine anything more magnificent than for God to fix his eye on you? His eye of blessing, when God fixes his eye upon someone, it's because he intends to bless. Well, I'll not give you more, but that's simply a sampling. There are literally hundreds of passages that speak of the fear of the Lord.

And I am simply saying that this pride, this glorious helper to keep these commandments consists of, number one, the fear of the Lord. Number two, the appreciation of the cost of our salvation. Look at these next two words.

Verse 18 Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood as of a lamb, unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. Now, some of the young people who know a lot about these things, but have yet to truly embrace Christ and to cast their all upon him, I'd just like to remind you of the love of God for you in Christ Jesus. I'd like to urge you to consider the price that God paid for you, the immensity of the love behind that.

It wasn't as if God looked around for something cheap, something that had no true value to him, something that didn't really matter. God, his own son, given to die in our place. What could be more powerful as a motivator to obedience than the realization of the price that was paid to procure forgiveness? Think again of the man whom I mentioned, who is struggling with the immensity of a terribly ill wife, and he's thinking, well, in the long run, I deserve it.

And I have to say to him, do you think God is a criminal that he would charge you twice? Well, let me state it in a different way. Do you think that God would have paid such an incredible price for your salvation if it wouldn't work? Sort of like an experiment, a trial, well, I've tried this, I've tried that, now I'll try this. No, no indeed.

That precious blood that was spilt as of a lamb, unblemished and without spot, was truly effective. And everyone here can rejoice. Now, in this passage, we've obviously got statements that some people trip over, statements about God's choosing us, and that sort of thing.

Isn't it wonderful? I'd like to testify to this to you as an old man. You know, I've been preaching a long time, and in a great many places, but I'm delighted to say to you, in all the years, not a single person has ever told me, I wish to be saved, and God would not save me. Not once.

Every single person who comes to Christ, this sacrifice of Christ is sufficient. Oh, sufficient for the nicest person in the room. Sufficient for the worst.

Even sufficient for this old sinner. Let us rejoice. But I'd like to focus upon this third matter that's mentioned here.

Turn again, if you will, to verses 20 and 21. For he was for Noah before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and your hope are in God. I believe that passage is speaking to the issue of the immensity of salvation.

It speaks obviously about God's foreknowledge, and it makes it clear that before the foundation of the world, God had mapped out a plan. It speaks about what God did in terms of sending His only begotten Son. It makes reference to His death.

It makes reference to the glory that He now possesses and the place where He now dwells. I know a number of folk in this church in various classes have studied that book of sermons that I assembled from the great awakening period, the 1700s, a book that appeared under the title Salvation in Full Color. And what I would like to do, first to remind those that have these things well in mind, and then for the sake of those who have not yet got a hold of the incredible truth, is it not magnificent to realize that God had mapped out the entirety of salvation before the first day of creation.

And for those who haven't got a hold of this, in that book I've just mentioned, when it was being prepared, it was given a title that some thought wouldn't work well. It was given the title The Gospel Umbrella. Now, most of us have capable imaginations.

Unfortunately, we sometimes act as if using the imagination was a childish thing to do. But may I ask each of you now to imagine an umbrella, a big umbrella, an umbrella with ten ribs. That means twenty tips.

And let's put a big label on the umbrella salvation. We won't try to mention all of the tips, but the holiness of God, the depravity of man, redemption, regeneration, repentance, faith, justification, adoption, conversion, sanctification, redemption for the second time, and retribution. Join me now as we think about those words.

Everything hangs on the doctrine of God. Those of you who were at the conference last week, weren't you thrilled that at last God got top billing? He's been underplayed so much in the church. It just did my heart good to be around you and others who were exalting the Lord God omnipotent.

He is the one who had this plan of salvation in mind before he created Adam and certainly long before anybody ever knew about us. And when we've got the doctrine of God at least somewhat right, thank God, we don't have to have everything down perfectly, but we've got it somewhat right. And we have to deal with man.

We don't hear the term very much. You do hear, but in most of the churches where they invite me, they just don't like the term and don't use it. Depravity.

Let me give you a picture of what depravity is. I step over here. I turn my back on dear Paul Kier.

And you see Chuck over there, the fellow that led the music? Well, I'm going to step over here so I can do it right. Now, let us say that it is my obligation to go directly from here to Chuck. But here's depravity.

Oh, sure! I'm coming, Chuck! Get ready! Oh, here I go! Oh, I'm on my way to Chuck! Sure enough, I'm bound to get there! Oh, yes! I am going there! Well, I'm a little tired. You don't mind if I sit down a little, do you? Well, yeah, that's where I'm going. I got to... Depravity is the inability to travel in a straight line to God.

That's a problem we all face. We do not have what it takes to get to God. We have that incredibly beautiful and powerful passage where John is quoting from Isaiah 40, recorded, of course, in Luke 3, and he talks about the preparation of the highway of holiness.

Every high place brought low. Every low place brought up. Every crooked way made straight.

Depravity. Our inability. And why are we so unable? Because our Father hates the thought of our reaching the goal.

He'll do anything and everything in his power to keep us from arriving at the place where we need to go. Now, it's a tough pill for some to swallow. I remember preaching in a fairly large church in California some time back, and the pastor himself was upset, and he took me aside.

He said, I don't like that talk about depravity. I don't think we're that bad. I think we're worse.

We are not born in this life as children of God, but children of the devil. The evil one is our father. And we can't help this problem of depravity, but God can.

And so, Jesus Christ becomes the Redeemer. Do you mind my speaking too personally? Do you know anything about trading stamps? Do you? All right. Yeah, well, I didn't mean to make an embarrassing call here, but there was a time when you couldn't buy gas, you couldn't go into a drug store, even most grocery stores.

They gave out little things they called trading stamps. There were a number of companies that did this. Now, I came from an extremely poor family, and trading stamps helped.

My task as a boy was to lick the back of those trading stamps and to paste them in the stamp books. And because I did the licking and the pasting, when we had three and one-half books, my mom and dad said, we're going to the Redemption Center. And because you did the licking and the pasting, you can go with us.

So we went to the S&H Green Stamp Redemption Center. And we came home with the very first electric toaster. That we had ever seen.

And we sat around the table, all six of us, enjoying toast that was not burned, that was not ruined. I mean, we had been holding it over the fire on a long fork. Now we got real toast.

The Redemption Center, Christ is the Redeemer. Christ purchased us back. He liberated us.

He set us free from our father, the devil. What an incredible thing! You could not break away. And you cannot deny to whom you belong in natural births.

Only God can provide the Redeemer and truly set you free. Then, after we had been redeemed, then through His Word and through His Spirit, He regenerated us, gave us life. The life of God in the soul of man.

A very long time ago, I was a pastor in Portland, Oregon. And one of the women and her husband, who had been gloriously converted, had a sister with the same religious background she had, but she was totally unchristian. I don't know, I should think at least a dozen times I spoke to that sister, explained the ways of God, pled with her to turn to Jesus Christ, and nothing good ever seemed to come of it.

I moved away from there, was gone for some time, but was back in the city preaching in another church, and this woman and her sister came. But the sister started witnessing to me, trying to help me to become a Christian. And I realized, all those times I had spoken to her and shared the Gospel with her, she never heard a word of it, because she had not been born again.

What an incredibly beautiful thing, while we are in the midst of our depravity, while we are truly children of the evil one, Christ, the Redeemer, sets us free. Many of you will remember that wonderful old hymn, Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it. Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, redeemed by His infinite mercy, His child and forever I am, and then regenerated.

So the deaf ears are made to hear, and the blind eyes are given sight, and the heart of stone becomes a heart of flesh. And God offers them those dual precious gifts of repentance and faith. And we are able to reach out and to receive.

And in repentance, having been traveling in the wrong direction, in repentance we turn about and go toward God instead of away from God. And now depravity no longer has us in its grip, and we are able to move directly into the very life of Christ, and the faith that He has given is exercised. Now many of you know this.

I am speaking to refresh the memories of those who know these things, but to appeal to those who don't. When repentance and faith are given and exercised, then God Himself justifies us. He wipes the slate clean.

He removes the record of sin. He'll never charge us again, as I've sought to illustrate. And He adopts us into His forever family.

The life of God is in us. And as we noted in those 12 verses at the beginning last week, He preserves both the inheritance and the heir. And so what has been provided is guaranteed.

We are His own dear children. And after we are adopted, then something begins to affect our appearance. What I've been speaking about is largely on the inside.

Did you ever put a vase of buds on the table? And did you ever have the experience that when you went to bed at night, they were buds? And when you got up in the morning, they had opened up into beautiful flowers? That's the nature of conversion. This glorious work within that God has been doing suddenly makes a public appearance. And we see before our eyes, and those of us who love Christ, love all those whom Christ brings into His family.

We see this wonderful change. If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. All things are passed away.

All things are become new. And then, of course, after conversion, that wonderful work of Christ accomplished in His death and burial and resurrection and ascension is at work within us. And that life that was full of evil, that life marred by sin of every kind, then begins to look increasingly like the life of Jesus.

In sanctification. Then we have that second word, redemption. You do know, I hope, that it's used two ways.

I already mentioned to buy back. But redemption. Philip, isn't it wonderful? One of these days we're going to keel over dead.

And when we do, that final redemption ushered into the very presence of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. To be justified, we must believe. To sanctify, we must believe.

But for that second redemption, just keel over. And then, retribution. Every man rewarded according to his... Now I say all of that because that's what these verses are talking about.

This incredible arrangement of salvation that God had prepared before the foundation of the earth. It's hard for me to understand why anyone who could see anywhere near the full picture and not get excited about it. If somebody told me when I was in the depth of sin, if you will turn over a new leaf, if you will try harder, somehow you can escape this life of depravity, it wouldn't have done any good.

It wouldn't have worked. But God has arranged in total everything necessary for you to be a part of his eternal family. And I just want to urge those of you who are still on the outside to stop struggling against God and to yield to him.

Once in a while somebody says, well, I don't think I can hold out. What's that got to do with the subject? It's God who does this glorious work. And all we have to do is to enjoy.

Now let's connect it again. Here we've got five commands. All right.

Number one, gird up the loins of your mind. When you understand the place of the fear of God, when you understand the price that Christ paid, when you are in the grip of the realization that God has worked it out in its entirety, and all you have to do is to yield to what God has done in faith in Jesus Christ. Well, then, who wants a mind that's wandering? Who wants to be at the liberty of a free-flowing garment? When a person truly becomes a Christian, their life takes on purpose of eternal value.

Seeking to be wealthy, you may be successful at. But who's going to get the money when you're gone? Because you're not going to take a single gold piece with you into eternity. And if somehow you could carry five billion dollars into hell, you couldn't buy your way out of the trouble you're in.

Isn't it wonderful? But when Christ steps into our life as Lord and Savior, our minds are girded up. We've got to focus. We've got a purpose.

I think I'm ready to go to heaven, but I'm not anxious to do so because I'd like to see at least a few more gathered in before I go. And I'd like truly to see the church in America revive. Now, if the Lord calls me home tonight, by His grace I'm ready.

But if He gives me a little while longer, I'm thrilled at the opportunity because I'm in the grip of a purpose. I have a job to do, and I enjoy it immensely by the grace of God. I'm asking, do you have a purpose? Is there a driving force in your life that involves bringing glory to the everlasting Savior? I can't afford to

casually move about in loose garments.

I've got to gird up my mind from day to day to accomplish what the Lord in His grace has permitted me to be part of. I don't have any plates for drunken. Sobriety is a natural part of the work of God in the soul of man.

And the more I meditate upon these three driving forces of fear and the price Christ paid and the grandeur of salvation that He has brought, then the more earnest I am about sobriety, and the more I long under God's grace to be completely gripped by the hope that is spoken of in verse 13. I'm asking simply, why waste away the days of life when you could be part of the glorious work that God is engaged in, in turning the world away from Satan and bringing multitudes into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Surely we don't have reason to be conformed to our former lust.

And it is possible to be holy even as He is holy because it is His holiness at work within us. Oh, I plead with you to be sure, to be absolutely sure that Christ is truly your all. Now, tomorrow night, the passage is incredibly beautiful, but tonight, tonight, be sure, don't waste another day lingering on the outskirts of what God has for you.

Let me lead us in prayer. Lord, over the years since this ministry began, your grace has been wonderfully apparent. I have had the joy personally of knowing a number of those whose lives have been radically transformed by Christ.

You give me the privilege of watching this congregation grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. You give me the privilege of knowing as a personal friend the beloved pastor and of knowing as well numbers of these people. But all of us are burdened lest some who have been under the sound of the word in this place be still outside of Christ.

So those of us who believe link our hearts tonight in earnest prayer for those who need to turn to their only hope. Will you by your gracious Holy Spirit make your truth so perfectly plain that not one person in the room will tarry on the outskirts of true religion but in faith will come running to Christ and cast themselves upon Him. And to our dear Lord Jesus Christ be forever the praise and the glory.

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