

A Study in Hebrews 13 - Part 2

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of leaving a religious system that denies the finished work of Christ and following Christ, even if it means facing rejection and persecution from family and friends.

Duration: 51:26

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 19:2, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 10:34-37, Luke 9:57-62, Hebrews 13:10, Revelation 18:4

Topics: "Exhortation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the wicked system described in the book of Revelation. The system is characterized by the rulers of the nations making alliances with it and the merchants profiting from it. The speaker emphasizes how this system has corrupted religion and made it a financial matter. The sermon also touches on the importance of putting Christ first in one's life and the potential conflicts that may arise, as mentioned in Matthew 10:34-36.

Transcript

Perhaps we could turn this morning to the last chapter of Hebrews, Hebrews 13, and I'd like to begin reading in verse 10. Hebrews 13, verse 10. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.

For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp bearing his reproach.

For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. Years ago when I was writing on the book of Hebrews, I put this little note at the beginning of the commentary. Hebrews deals with a tremendous struggle involved in leaving one religious system for another.

There's a violent wrenching of old ties, the stresses and tensions of alienation, and the formidable pressures exerted on the renegade to return. For instance, when a Jew left the faith of his forefathers, he was looked upon as a turncoat and an apostate, and he was often punished with one or more of the following hurts. First of all, he was disinherited by his family, crossed out of the will.

Then of course, he was excommunicated from the Commonwealth of Israel. You find that in John chapter 9, where the man born blind came to the Lord Jesus, and he was converted, and they put him out of the

synagogue. It was all right.

Jesus would have led him out anyway. They just saved the Lord Jesus, the task of doing it. Then there was often the loss of employment.

That's still true in Israel today. For instance, when a person becomes a believer in the Lord Jesus, he's often put out of his job, dispossessed, all kinds of mental harassment and physical torture and public mockery. And down through the years, it has not been unknown for Christians to be imprisoned and some to be martyred because they took this stand for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Of course, it was always the escape route. If they wanted to avoid that sort of treatment, all they had to do was renounce Christ and return to the old religious system. They could completely escape persecution by doing that.

Really, the whole issue was the Lord Jesus Christ and your relationship to him. And I want to think of that because there are two very great problems that face people today. When they hear the gospel, and when the Holy Spirit is tugging at their hearts, and they know they should be saved, and yet there's this tremendous pressure exerted on them not to leave the church or the religious system of their forefathers.

And many of the people in the room today have gone through that sort of a situation. Many of you have had to face that. You've had to face whether it would be Christ or a religious system where he is left outside.

So let's think first of all today of an unsaved woman, let's say. And she hears the gospel, and she's convicted of sin. She knows that she needs a Savior.

And actually, she knows that Jesus is the Savior that she needs. And she wants to make the decision, but she doesn't. Why doesn't she make the decision? Fear.

The tremendous fear of trusting Christ. What's the fear? First of all, fear of what my family would say. It's very real, isn't it? I mean, we love our mother, our father, brothers and sisters, our loved ones.

And this tremendous emotional upheaval. I know what I should do. I know I should be saved.

I just can't face the reaction of my relatives. And not only that, not only the fear of what the relatives would say, but the fear of what your friends would say as well. But that's very real.

I felt that very keenly in my own life at the age of 18, when the Spirit of God was working powerfully in my life. And I knew what I should do. I knew I should repent of my sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thought of those young people back in high school. If I ever went back and told them I was saved, I thought of the sneers. I thought of the snide remarks that they would make.

You know, face that. That was too much. I was really keenly interested that they think well of me.

You know, the funny thing is that they're all gone today. They mean nothing in my life. I couldn't locate one of them today.

My life depended on it. Here I was so worried about what they would say. And they just passed completely out of my life.

But the Lord is still there, isn't he? But I'm so glad that the Holy Spirit of God gave me the power to say, I will not go with my friends to hell. I will trust the sinner's Savior and be saved for time and eternity. You know, it's good that the Bible anticipates this.

The Bible tells you very clearly that when you come to the place of decision, when you're in the valley of decision and the choice must be made, it's going to create problems. Matthew 10, verses 34 and 36. I'm so glad these verses are in the Bible.

Matthew 10, verses 34 to 36. The Lord Jesus said, Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes will be those of his own household. Now, let me just quickly explain what those verses mean.

It doesn't mean that the coming, the primary purpose of the coming of the Lord Jesus into the world was to bring a sword, was to create conflict. But what he is saying here is that when Christ comes into a life, that's the almost inevitable result. And I've told you about that before.

I told you about one of our former interns, and he had been on drugs before he was saved. He had been on alcohol. He had been burned out with sex.

His life was just a mess. And he got saved down in Atlanta, Georgia. And he telephoned his father in Grand Rapids and said, Dad, I'm saved.

The father said, the front door is locked. The barn door is locked. Don't come home.

Now, it was all right with the father when he was on drugs. It was all right with the father when he was an alcoholic. It was all right with the father when he was living a life of sexual immorality.

That was okay. The minute Christ came in, the front door is locked. The barn door is locked.

Don't come home. That's what the Lord means here. Don't think that I came to bring peace.

I didn't come to bring peace. But a sword, a man's foes, shall be those of his own household. And I'm sure I told you the story of Jim McCarthy when God called him to go to Ireland, and he went over to San Francisco to say goodbye to his father before leaving.

And the father said, you've disgraced the family. You never need to come home. And we've got to be prepared to face that.

But I'm so glad that the Lord warned us about this in the word of God. And that's what it means when it says, I have come to set a man against his father. There's a tension created there.

And the question is, who are you going to choose, your father or Jesus Christ? That's what it comes down to. A daughter against her mother and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes will be those of his own household.

We're going to come back to that passage. Just know that this is what expected. And this is what I would tell somebody if I was speaking to somebody and I sensed that the Holy Spirit was drawing them to Christ.

And yet this conflict was going on in their mind. What would my parents think? What would my family think? What would my friends think? In coming to Jesus Christ, you have to love him more than any earthly relationship. That's what it boils down to.

Luke chapter 14. Perhaps you'd hold your finger in that place in Matthew 10, and just turn over to Luke chapter 14, verse 26. If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

People have an awful lot of problem with this verse, and I don't blame them because of that word hate. Because of that word hate. It really causes people to wonder.

So let me explain it. When the Lord Jesus used the word hate, he didn't mean that we should have bitter, acrimonious feelings toward our parents. This is a Hebrew way of expressing a comparison.

And what it is saying is that when you come to the Lord Jesus, your love to him must be so great that all other loves are hatred by comparison. That's what it means. So how do you know that's what it means? Turn back to Matthew chapter 10, where we've just been reading.

After the Lord warned the people that his coming was going to bring conflict into families, he says in verse 37, he who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. So there you have the comparison.

More than me. More than me. That's what that word hatred in Luke means.

It means that your love to Christ must come first. And if you have to decide between Christ and mother or father, you decide for Christ. So it's really saying.

And many have to do that today. You say, well, that's kind of bitter. That's kind of hard, isn't it? Well, let me tell you something.

A mother or father who have a son or daughter who loves Jesus Christ supremely have a wonderful son or daughter. They're going to have a son and daughter who loves them more than he ever loved them before. And after they get to know that person in Christ, they're going to be rejoicing that he or she is no longer on drugs, liquor, immorality, and all the rest.

But it takes time for this to develop and for them to come to know that. So you must love the Lord Jesus more than any earthly relationships. Secondly, you must love God's praise more than men's praise.

This is very, very important. John chapter 12, verse 43. You must love God's praise more than men's praise.

John 12, 43. I should go back to verse 42. It says, Nevertheless, even among the rulers, many believed in him, but because of the Pharisees, get it? Because of the Pharisees, they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, excommunicated.

For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. And this is another thing that a person has to face before he becomes a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whose praise do you want? Do you want the praise of people who are going down to hell, pell-mell? Or do you want the praise of the eternal God who sent his Son to die for your sins? John 5, 44.

John 5, 44. Verse 43, Jesus said, I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him.

That is the Antichrist. He said, I am come in my Father's name, you don't want me. But another will come in his own name, that's the Antichrist, 666, and you will receive him.

Then he said in verse 44, How can you believe who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God? It's a real choice, isn't it? And before a person is converted to God, who faith in the Lord Jesus, he has to face that. Whose honor do I really want? Do I want the honor of people who are just pieces of clay, and who will soon pass off the scene? Do I want the honor of the eternal God whom I'm going to meet someday? You must love God's praise more than man. And then if I were speaking to somebody who knows he should be saved, but doesn't dare leave his church, let's say, I would say to him, What has your church done for you? Do you know today the forgiveness of sins? That's what the Lord Jesus offers.

Do you know that your sins have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, and that you'll never be held accountable before God for them? That's what Christ offers. Has your church given you that? I would ask them, Do you have assurance of salvation at the present time? Can you say without a shadow of a doubt, I know I'm saved? Only born-again Christians can say that. You talk to any other people, you talk to the people in the average church in the United States, you say, Are you saved? They say, I hope so.

I'm doing my best, and when I stand before God, he'll weigh my good works and my bad works, and I just hope my good works will outweigh my bad works. But they don't have assurance of salvation. I would ask this person, Do you know that you are eternally secure? Do you know that nothing can ever separate you from the love of God? Has your church given you that assurance? Of course it doesn't, because most church systems today are based upon works, not upon grace.

As long as salvation is based upon works, you can never know that you have eternal security. You just have to live from one day to the next. I'd like to ask that person, Do you feel that you can meet God with confidence? After all, you're going to die.

You're going to go out and meet God. Are you going to be able to do it with confidence? The answer is only if you're saved by grace through faith. Can you do that? Basically, for most people today, it's a choice, whether they'd rather have ritual or reality, whether they'd rather have the shadow or the substance, whether they'd rather have the type or the anti-type.

And that's brought out very clearly in this letter to the Hebrews. Well, that's one question. If an unsaved person knows that she should be saved, and yet all of this emotional turmoil goes on in the person's life, they have to decide whether Christ is worth making a tremendous break.

The second problem has to do with people who have trusted Christ as Savior, and they're afraid to leave the church of their forefathers. Once again, what are they afraid of? Well, they're afraid of parental fury. I think of my friend Charlotte Mostert back in Chicago, and how she trusted the Lord Jesus as her Savior, and she never told her parents.

Her husband was saved, and she was saved now, and they knew they were on their way to heaven, but she had a Polish mother, and she was really afraid to tell her. One day after she got Jack off to work and the children off to school, the Lord said to her, this is the day, Charlotte. And she said her legs turned to

India rubber, but she knew what she had to do.

She went over to her mother's house, and she told her mother that she was now a believer in the Lord Jesus. Her mother flung herself down on the kitchen floor and screamed, my daughter will never leave the church. Charlotte said, I've already left it, mother.

The mother was just furious. But an interesting thing happened, that mother had other sons and daughters, you know, and with the passing of time, their lives began to fall apart. Some of them were in drugs, some of them are all kinds of business and shameful activities.

Who do you think the mother came to for comfort? She came to Charlotte. See, the Lord has ways of working with the passing of time, and that mother began to see that there was reality in Charlotte's life that wasn't in the life of the other sons and daughters. She would come to Charlotte to talk these things out with her.

I don't know that she herself ever got saved. A mother's fury, a father's anger, being thrown out of the house and being cut out of the will. And then, of course, ostracism by friends once again.

It's interesting, when a person becomes a Christian and really takes a decided stand for the Lord, he really doesn't have to make too much of a break from his friends. They have no more use for him. He no longer does the things that they want to do.

And as far as they're concerned, he's dead. Well, it's true, he's dead. He's died to all that sort of thing.

Calvary is a place of goodbyes, isn't it? Paul said, God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. The world says goodbye to you when you become a Christian, and you say, thanks a lot, goodbye. It's mutual.

You say, well, why would people, after they get saved, want to stay in a church that denies so many of the fundamentals of the Christian faith, whatever that church might be? Well, they say, my grandfather was a member of that church, my father was a member of that church, I'm a member of that church, and if I were a monkey, I'd be a member of that church. You've heard people talk like that. Not a good argument.

Or they say, I'm going to stay in the church and change the church. That's the biggest delusion. You can never change a system as long as you're a part of it.

You've got to get outside a system in order to change it. God is a God of separation, but he wants his people to live lives of separation. Archimedes said he could move the world if he could find a fulcrum outside the world, but he'd have to get outside the world to move it.

Well, that's a great principle. It's a great spiritual principle enshrined there. You can't move the world or a church system as long as you're a part of it.

You have to get outside. You say, well, I'm going to be a voice for God in the church as long as I live. Well, your voice will soon be drowned out.

You won't be welcome. Well, Jesus is not welcome. His people aren't welcome either.

What is involved in staying in an unscriptural church system? Well, there are a lot of things involved. First of all, if I were to stay in an unscriptural church today, I would be denying the finished work of the Lord

Jesus Christ on the Calvary. When my Savior died 2,000 years ago, he finished the work necessary for my redemption.

I told you last week about the priest who said Christ died for 99% of our sins. We have to pay for the other 1%. The virtual denial of the finished work of Christ.

That's true of the modernistic liberal Protestant churches as well. You have to work for your salvation. You have to deserve your salvation.

None of us deserve salvation. If we got what we deserved, we'd be in hell forever. For me to stay in a system like that would be condoning a false gospel which God curses.

Paul said that in Galatians chapter 1. He said, if anyone comes to you and preaches any other gospel than the one I preach, let him be accursed. And what was the gospel he preached? You don't deserve salvation. God saves you by grace.

The Lord Jesus finished the work on the cross of Calvary. You simply accept it by faith. The moment you do that, he saves your soul.

All other religions in the world tell you that you have to either earn or deserve salvation. That's law, and it's under the curse. It just breaks my heart to think of people today, outwardly decent people, being deluded by a false gospel.

Many churches today, you stay in them, you're condoning idolatry. The use of idols, the use of icons, which are absolutely forbidden by the second commandment. You shall not make unto you any graven image.

It doesn't even say, bow down to them. It says, make them. Making of these graven images is condemned.

And in many cases, you're condoning a system that has killed, martyred true Christians down through the centuries. It's amazing, and I think we mentioned this last week, that the bitterest opposition to the true Christian faith has come from religious people. I mentioned that it was the religious leaders who nailed the Christ of God to the cross of Calvary.

They were the ones, not the common people, but the religious leaders. For me to stay in the average church system today would be staying in a place where I would never spiritually. That's why Dwight L. Moody said, I wouldn't put live chicks under a dead hen.

That's absolutely right. Don't put live chicks under a dead hen. But the great reasons are found in the Bible.

And I want to turn to you, turn with you, to several passages of Scripture that leave no doubt as to what a person should do. 2 Corinthians 6, verse 14. Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? In other words, to stay. Paul says, how can you do that? How can two walk together except they be agreed? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. When he says you, he's speaking about true, born-again believers.

You are the temple of the living God. As God has said, I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God and they shall be my people.

Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean. You're saying, I know, but my loved ones, my relatives, my friends.

God said, look, you obey me and I will receive you and I will be a father to you and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. In other words, you obey me and you will come to know me in an intimate relationship that you never could have known before. I will take the place of those relatives.

I will take the place of those friends. I will fill your life. You will know fulfillment.

Just obey my word. I don't know how language could be clearer than that. Yet you hear people talking about going back into this church and that church to purify the church and to change the church.

God doesn't say that. He says, come out, come out from among them and be separate. And then the passage that we read in Hebrews, let's turn back to that again.

Hebrews 13. And the interesting thing is, you know, when the Lord Jesus was crucified, he wasn't crucified inside the walls of Jerusalem, within the walls of Jerusalem. He was taken to a place outside the city and crucified there.

In other words, as far as the leaders were concerned, Jerusalem was a holy place and it wouldn't be fitting to kill this imposter in a holy place. So they took him outside as if he were unfit to die in Jerusalem. But the writer of the Hebrews says there's a spiritual principle there.

He was crucified outside the camp. Go forth to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach. The camp here would be organized religion where Christ is not honored.

That's what it is. The camp is organized religion where the Lord Jesus is not honored as only God and only Savior. And notice what it says, go to him outside the camp bearing his, what? Reproach.

You say, that's what bothers me about becoming a Christian, reproach. Listen, if you're going to become a Christian, you better face it as a reproach in being a true born again believer today. There always has been.

There always will be. But a person should be proud to bear the reproach of Christ. To be proud to be sneered at and scoffed at.

To be able to lift his head a little higher and say, I'm a fool for Christ's sake. Whose fool are you? Let us go forth to him outside the camp bearing his reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.

Meaning we're just pilgrims down here on this earth. This is not our home. We're looking for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Revelation 18 verses four and five. Revelation 18 verses four and five. In Revelation 17 and 18, John is describing a tremendous system.

It's both a religious system and it's a business system that combined. And it's known as Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots. It has a business face to it and it has a religious face to it.

And the book of Revelation tells us that in the coming day, it's going to be destroyed. It's going to fall under the wrath of God. And notice what it says in Revelation 18 verses four and five.

I heard another voice from heaven saying, come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven. God has remembered her iniquities.

Rendered to her just as she rendered to you and repay her double according to her works in the cup, which he has mixed, mix for her double. And it describes this system. And some of the things that it describes are very, very interesting.

Verse nine, the kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her. In other words, the rulers of the nations of the earth have made leagues and covenants with this evil system. And they all weep and lament when they see the smoke of her burning.

The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her. Verse 11, for no one buys their merchandise anymore. Verse 17, in one hour such great riches come to nothing and so forth.

It tells in these chapters how this wicked system has dealt in the souls of men, trafficked in the souls of men, made religion a financial matter. So much so that people today say all the church wants is your money. Well, there you have it.

God says, come out of her, my people, so that you don't participate in the plagues that are going to be poured upon you. Another verse, 2 Chronicles, chapter 19, verse 2. 2 Chronicles, chapter 19, verse 2. I just want to stay in the church as long as I live, in this apostate church. Jehu, the son of Hanani, the seer, went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord? Therefore, the wrath of the Lord is upon you.

Once again, God calling his people to separation. Do you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord? If you do, you're subject to the wrath of God. We've already read Matthew 10, verses 34 to 37.

Let's just look at it again. Matthew 10, verses 34 to 37. Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth.

I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. The man's foes will be those of his own household.

He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. He who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Then I think of Luke 9, verse 62.

I should probably read the portion beginning in verse 57. It happened as they journeyed on the road that someone said Lord, I will follow you wherever you go. Jesus said to them, Foxes of holes, birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

Then he said to another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, let me first go and bury my father. Jesus said to him, Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.

And another said, Lord, I will follow you, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house. Jesus said to him, No one, having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. Let me say a few words about this.

The first man comes to him full of eagerness. He wants to follow Jesus. He volunteers.

Jesus didn't say anything to him. He came rushing up to Jesus and said, Lord, I will follow you wherever you go. And Jesus said, Really? Count the cost.

Foxes of holes, birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Then he said to the next one, You follow me. And he said, Lord, let me first.

Christ has to come first, not me first. Let me first go and bury my father. Well, I don't think his father had died.

I think he meant let me go and wait till my father dies and give him a decent burial, and then I'll follow you. Jesus said, Let the dead bury their dead. You go and preach the kingdom of God.

And the second one was afflicted with me first, too. The third one, he said, Lord, I will follow you, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house. You see, family, family, family.

And it didn't mean just going home and saying, So long, folks. He was thinking about a long, protracted farewell party, you know, with the gifts and all the rest. And Jesus said, No, that's not what my disciples are made of.

No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God, which is just another way of saying that Christ must come first in the life. And I just thought of another passage in Revelation chapter 3 in the letter to the Church of Laodicea, verse 14. Incidentally, this church, we believe, is a picture of the Latter-day Church.

To the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. I know your works. You're neither cold nor hot.

I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you're lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. This church was just going through religious motions.

There's no reality to it. No zeal. Because you say I am rich, have become wealthy and have need of nothing, and do not know that you're wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed.

And anoint your eyes with eye-sob that you may see. Many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent.

Now listen. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. Is he inside the door or outside? Well, obviously he's outside.

He's standing outside the door of the church of Laodicea. Jesus Christ is outside. Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Christ is outside the door of the church of Laodicea, but he's knocking on the heart's door and asking men, women, boys and girls to let him in. So here's a person that he has been saved. He's genuinely born again, and yet he wants to stay in Laodicea, this apostate church.

What should he do? The first thing he should do is bite the bullet and obey God. Obey God and leave the consequences to him. That's what I would tell people all over the world today who are facing this great problem.

Leave the consequences to him, so your family is furious and your friends forsake you. The next thing to do is to show them that Christ makes a difference in their life. Unfortunately, when a lot of people get saved, they go home and they really blow it.

They cram the gospel down their relatives' throats, and they really act in an unchristian way in some cases. The thing to do is to show Christ to your relatives and friends, even if they reject it. I was reading this morning about a man.

The surest way to get a kindness from him was to show him a discourtesy. Boy, what a tribute to pay to anybody. He's a Christian.

The surest way to get a kindness from him was to show him a discourtesy. That's what we're called to do. We take our place with Christ outside the camp.

Our relatives and friends are furious. We just live Christ before them. We love them more than we ever loved them before, and we show our love to them in practical ways.

We show it, not blow it, and then endure opposition in a Christian manner. It's hard for young believers to do, but that's what we're called to do. The Lord Jesus, who when he was reviled, reviled not again.

He committed himself to him who judges righteously. This is really what counts with relatives. God loves to save families.

Many people have been used of God to win their own families, not so much by their preaching as by their life. You can't argue against a Christlike life. No matter how difficult it is, that's what we're called to do.

Wait patiently for God to change your opposition. I have known many, many cases where that's exactly what's happened, where a person trusts the Lord, goes back home, endures all kinds of rebuke and criticism and ostracism and all the rest of it. He just continues to live Christ, continues to live Christ, bears it patiently, doesn't fight back, doesn't defend himself.

People start to notice a difference. They say, you've got something I don't have. I don't know what it is, but I want it.

God is a God of separation. He calls his people to separate from all kinds of evil, religious evil as well as moral and doctrinal evil. Maybe he's speaking to some today.

I don't know. I don't know where you stand individually before God, but I know if you're unsaved, you have to make some choices. You have to decide whether you want God's approval more than men's.

You have to love Jesus Christ more than you love any other person or thing. After we pray, John will come up and lead us in a closing hymn. Father, we are so thankful this morning that the Lord Jesus told us in advance what it would mean when we trusted him as Savior, that there would be opposition, that there would be ridicule, that there would be tribulation.

We thank you that he's sufficient for all of these things and that he's worthy of our full, confiding trust. We thank you for the wonderful way in which he is able to take care of all of that opposition and oftentimes change it, oftentimes melt it down, so that those people themselves become some of the most ardent followers of the Lord Jesus. We pray, Lord, for the mass of people today who are going on in blindness, religious people, church-attending people, believing that they can be saved by their good life, by their good character, and not realizing that only through the Lord Jesus and his finished work on the cross can they be saved.

We pray for the gospel as it goes out today, for every faithful messenger of yours who proclaims the word of truth. We pray that there might be a great ingathering. We pray for our country today, which is on the skids morally and in many other ways.

Father, we pray that you raise up prophets, you raise up reformers, raise up men who will boldly cry out against sin and iniquity, and call men and women to yourself. We ask it in the Savior's name.

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