



BRIGHT LIGHTS IN A DARK WORLD

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





Bright Lights in a Dark World

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Bright Lights in a Dark World

SERMON REFERENCE: 1 Peter 3:13-16

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2316

In the 1st Century, Christians were accused of subversion, of being an economic threat, and of condemning others. Their accounts are a clear warning of the days ahead for Christians of the 21st Century. In 1 Peter, we are instructed to be real, to be ready, and to be bright lights in a dark world. 1 Peter 3:13-14 says, “And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed...”

There are six things we need to remember if we want to shine in these dark days.

First, we must enthrone Christ as Lord: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts...” (1 Peter 3:15). Often we hear people say they’ve accepted Jesus as their Savior, but we cannot have what He gives unless we accept Him as Lord. Adrian Rogers says, “You’re not saved by the plan of salvation; you’re saved by the man of salvation and His name is Jesus.”

Second, we must be ready with an answer: “...always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you...” (1 Peter 3:15). If we have truly been saved, there will be something about us that is unexplainable; we must be ready to give a defense for our faith.

Third, we must practice genuine humility: “...with meekness and fear...” (1 Peter 3:15).

Meekness is not weakness, it is strength under control. In this context, fear is not trembling at what is happening around us; it speaks of holy reverence for Almighty God.

We must also live a superior lifestyle: “...having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed” (1 Peter 3:16).

We are called to be wise in our conduct and speech. We must also display genuine love. Our logic and our lifestyle have to go together—a full mind wedded with a loving heart.

Finally, we must always hold onto hope; Jesus has met the deepest needs of our hearts, therefore we have hope.

LIFE APPLICATION

These are the greatest days of evangelism in the history of the Christian church. In light of the current climate of this world, we should go out with banners unfurled and be bright lights in a dark world.



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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) The first century world was very dark.
 - i) When Peter wrote the Scripture that we will study today, the Christians were despised.
 - ii) The Christians at that time were accused of insurrection and subversion because they would not bow down and call Caesar "Lord."
 - iii) Christians were looked upon as an economic threat because there was a great business in idolatry.
 - iv) The lifestyle of Christians condemned others.
 - v) Christians were accused of incest because they called one another brother and sister, including their spouses.
 - vi) They were accused of cannibalism because they said that they were eating and drinking the body and blood of Jesus Christ at the Lord's Supper.
- b) 1 Peter 3:13-16
 - i) The word "followers" in verse 13 is the word from which we get our word "zealot."
- c) We find ourselves living in a time where there are those who want to terrorize us.
 - i) Our response is not to just hunker down and close up shop.
 - ii) There has never been a greater day, a greater age, or a greater time to preach the Gospel of Christ than in this day and age.
 - (1) We should be armed with the glorious Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with a mighty demonstration of love.
 - (a) But we cannot be silent.
- d) The time has come for us to speak, and Peter tells us in this passage of Scripture:
 - i) That we need to be real.
 - (1) We need to be followers of that which is good and not some sort of plastic mentality of Christianity.
 - ii) That we need to be ready.
 - (1) 1 Peter 3:15
 - (a) When was the last time someone asked you about your faith?
- e) Today's message will look at six things, found in these verses in 1 Peter, that we need to be in this dark day in which we're living.

2) WE MUST ENTHRONE CHRIST AS LORD (1 Peter 3:15)

- a) 1 Peter 3:15
 - i) The word "sanctify" means to set Him aside as special, above all, and as reigning Lord.
- b) Is Jesus Christ Lord in your life?
 - i) This does not mean, "Do you admit that He is Lord?"
 - ii) Have you ever bowed the knee to Him?



- iii) Charles Spurgeon, a preacher of yesteryear, said that if someone professes to be a Christian and says that they know what God wants them to do but they don't intend to do it, then it is our duty to tell that person that he is not saved.
 - iv) The apostles preached the Lordship of Christ.
 - (1) The word "Savior" is found only twice in the book of Acts.
 - (2) The title "Lord" is mentioned 92 times.
 - v) We often hear people say that we need to accept Christ as our Savior.
 - (1) We cannot have what He gives unless we accept who He is, and He is Lord.
 - vi) This question is not asking if you're a member of a church or if you've been baptized or if you know the plan of salvation.
 - (1) You're not saved by the plan of salvation but by the man of salvation, and His name is Jesus.
 - c) Some people think that salvation means calling upon the Lord Jesus Christ to meet their needs and looking to Him to take care of them while they go back to their old lifestyle.
 - i) They in essence are telling the Lord Jesus to take His hands off their life.
 - (1) This is not salvation.
 - d) Has there been a radical change in your life?
 - i) Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your life?
- 3) WE MUST BE READY WITH AN ANSWER (1 Peter 3:15)
 - a) 1 Peter 3:15
 - b) If you have a changed life, then people will come to you and ask you what the reason is for your hope.
 - i) On the day of Pentecost, the people asked, "What meaneth this?"
 - (1) Acts 2:12
 - ii) The people at Pentecost then asked, "What must we do?"
 - (1) Acts 2:37
 - (2) The reason many people today don't ask, "What must we do?" is because they haven't seen anything that is different.
 - iii) On the day of Pentecost, there was something that was unexplainable.
 - (1) Is there something about your life that is unexplainable?
 - (2) Can your life be explained apart from Jesus Christ?
 - c) We are to be ready to give an answer for the reason for our hope.
 - d) In 1 Peter 3:15, the word for "to give an answer" is the word from which we get our word "apologetics."
 - i) The word "apologetics" is a courtroom word that means "to give a defense of your faith."
 - ii) Can you defend your faith?
 - (1) Many people today are asking why an all-powerful, all-loving and all-knowing God allows bad and tragic things to happen to people.
 - (a) This is their argument:
 - (i) If God were all good, then He would destroy evil.
 - (ii) If God were all powerful, then He could destroy evil.



- (iii) But evil is not destroyed; hence, there is no such God.
- (2) There is an answer in the Word of God to this question:
 - (a) Matthew 22:36-37
 - (i) This is the bottom line and sums it all up.
 - (b) The faith of Jesus Christ is built on love and life, not hate and death.
 - (c) God made man a free creature.
 - (i) God wanted man to love Him and to love one another.
 - (ii) Forced love is a contradiction in terms.
 - (iii) For a person to be able to love, he has to be able not to love.
 - (iv) If we were created where we could only love and do nothing else, then it wouldn't be love at all.
 - 1. We would just simply be machines.
 - (v) God gave man the freedom of choice.
 - (d) We cannot choose to love unless we can choose not to love.
 - (e) Love is the highest good.
 - (f) For God to take away our choice would be for God to destroy the highest good.
 - (i) If God were to do that and destroy evil (which would be to destroy choice), then that act itself would be evil.
 - (g) God does not destroy evil; He defeats evil by putting His Son upon a cross.
 - (i) John 15:13
- 4) WE MUST PRACTICE GENUINE HUMILITY (1 Peter 3:15)
 - a) There is no time to strut in arrogance.
 - b) 1 Peter 3:15
 - i) Meekness is not weakness.
 - (1) It is strength under control.
 - ii) Fear is not trembling at what is happening around us.
 - (1) It speaks of a holy reverence for Almighty God.
 - c) America will not be won by arguments alone or by the ballot box.
 - i) There are many people who think of Christians as arrogant.
 - ii) Many people will call us hate mongers and will think of us as intolerant.
 - iii) We must be careful not to use angry rhetoric when we respond to others.
 - iv) James 1:19-20
 - (1) Our anger and wrath do not bring about God's righteousness.
 - (a) The Lord Jesus showed anger against those who were persecuting helpless people.
 - (b) He showed anger toward the religious hypocrites of His day.
 - (c) But to those who were victims of sin, He showed love.
 - d) We need to be ready to give an answer, but to also show love in genuine humility.
 - i) It is possible to be so arrogant that we'll win the argument but lose the audience.
 - e) It is not the time to point fingers at everyone else.
 - i) 1 Peter 4:17



- ii) All that has happened in America today has happened on our watch.
- iii) We need to confess the sins of the church.
 - (1) We need to confess our laziness, our selfishness, our pride, and our refusal to live a separated life and to share the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

5) WE MUST LIVE A SUPERIOR LIFESTYLE (1 Peter 3:16)

- a) 1 Peter 3:16
 - i) We will be falsely accused, but it will be to their shame because our lifestyle will be superior.
- b) We are to be blameless.
 - i) This does not mean sinless.
 - ii) 1 Peter 3:15 says that people will ask us questions about the hope that is in us because they can see something different about us.
- c) 1 Peter 2:12
 - i) The word “conversation” here means “behavior.”
 - ii) When the Lord Jesus comes again, they will have to say that Christians were living a superior lifestyle.
- d) We need to out-love, out-live, out-give, out-pray and out-witness the people of this world.
 - i) Earn respect.
 - ii) Let them see your good works.
- e) When Paul and Silas were in the Philippian jail, others around them were cursing and moaning.
 - i) Paul and Silas were praying.
 - ii) Paul and Silas were singing praises to God and giving God thanks.
 - iii) Everyone in the prison saw the difference.
 - (1) Acts 16:28-31
 - iv) There was something different about their lifestyle in the midst of tribulation.
 - (1) The Bible doesn't say that we won't have tribulation.
 - v) Paul and Silas were a bright light in a dark place, and that's the reason the jailer asked them what he must do to be saved.
 - (1) Acts 16:30-31

6) WE MUST DISPLAY GENUINE LOVE (1 Peter 4:8-9)

- a) 1 Peter 4:8-9
 - i) The word “charity” in this passage means “love.”
- b) Troubling circumstances and situations give us an opportunity to respond in love.
- c) As believers in Christ, we believe that abortion is the shedding of innocent blood.
 - i) But what are we doing for the unwed mother who needs help?
 - ii) We are to show them love.
- d) There are many people whose homes have been severed by divorce.
 - i) We need to reach out to them and love them in the name of the Lord Jesus.
- e) Pornography is horrible and vile.



- i) It is antithetical to true love and is based on lust.
 - (1) Lust wants to get; love wants to give.
 - ii) Many people today are caught up in pornography.
 - (1) We should reach out to them in love and share with them where the answer is found, in the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - f) We should reach out in love to those who are caught in a lifestyle of perversion and demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ.
 - g) If we are to be bright lights in a dark world, then we need to be known not merely for what we're against but what we are for.
- 7) WE MUST ALWAYS HOLD ON TO HOPE (1 Peter 3:15)
 - a) 1 Peter 3:15
 - i) The word "hope" here does not mean a mere wish or fond desire.
 - (1) It means rock-ribbed truth based on the Word of God.
 - (2) It is divine certainty based on the Word of God.
 - b) No matter how dark the day is, we are on the winning side.
 - i) Sin cannot win.
 - ii) Faith cannot fail.
 - iii) Have faith in God.
 - c) Our job is not ultimately to save America or to preserve our lifestyle or our freedoms.
 - i) We must do these things, but our main responsibility is to stand for Jesus Christ.
 - ii) We must put our hope, our faith and our prayers in something that cannot fail and in a Kingdom that cannot be shaken.
 - (1) That is our hope.
 - d) Statistics show that more souls are coming to Christ in this day and in this age than since the Lord Jesus walked this Earth.
 - e) Instead of hunkering down in a corner, we need to go out in the name of the Lord Jesus and be bright lights in this dark world.
 - i) God is our source of supply.
 - ii) The Holy Spirit is our ally.
 - iii) Jesus Christ is our Commander in Chief.
- 8) CONCLUSION
 - a) Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your life?
 - i) Why should souls around the world be coming to Jesus and you be left out?
 - ii) The Lord Jesus died on the cross for you, and He rose again.
 - b) Would you like to be saved?
 - i) You can be today.
 - c) Pray to Him now and ask Him to come into your life.
 - d) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23



- ii) Romans 10:9-10
- iii) Romans 10:13
- iv) Acts 16:31
- v) John 3:16



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Would you take God's Word and turn to First Peter chapter 3? We're thinking today on this subject, "Bright Lights in a Dark World." Now the first century world was very dark. When Peter wrote the Scripture that I'm about to read to you, friend, I want to tell you something, it was open season on Christians. They despised Christians. Number one, they accused them of insurrection and subversion because they would not bow down and call Caesar, "Lord." Number two, they looked upon Christians as an economic threat because there was a great business in idolatry and so forth and they saw them, somehow, as a roadblock, an impediment to progress. And number three, their lifestyle condemned others, and they accused them of all kinds of things. Incest because they called one another brother and sister and number two, even people they were married to they thought of as a sister or a brother. They accused them of cannibalism because at the Lord's Supper, they said they were eating and drinking the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And they would take anything and twist it and use it against these early Christians.

And so Peter wrote this Scripture, and I want you to read it now, First Peter chapter 3 beginning in verse 13 to verse 16. He asked this question, "And who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?" And the word followers is the word we get our word zealot from. "If you be zealous of that which is good. But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye and be not afraid of their terror." Now just underscore that, "Be not afraid of their terror, neither be ye troubled." That's God's Word for you this morning. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear, having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accused your good conversation in Christ."

Now what do we do in a time where there are those who want to terrorize us? Do we just hunker down? Do we close up shop? Put our head between our knees and pray, "Lord, keep us safe till the storm passes over?" Not at all! There has never been a greater day, a greater age, a greater time to preach the glorious Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ than this day and this age, and we don't need to sing, "Hold the Fort." Friend, we need to sing, "Onward Christian Soldiers." Not armed with bullets, not armed with bombs, but armed with the glorious Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with a mighty, mighty, mighty demonstration of love. But we cannot be silent.

Back in Hitler's time, when Hitler was trying to rule the world, there was a pastor named Martin Niemöller. Martin Niemöller began to preach, and as a result of it, Hitler had him put in a concentration camp. And then, finally in solitaire. But, finally Martin Niemöller was released and he began to preach, and he always ended his messages with this statement, "First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews,



but I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak out for anyone.”

Now the time has come for us to speak, and Peter tells us in this passage that number one, we need to be real, we need to be followers of that which is good, we don't need a plastic, cardboard mentality in Christianity. And number two, we need to be ready. In First Peter 3 verse 15 he says, “You be ready to give an answer to anyone that asks you of the hope that is in you.” By the way, when's the last time anybody asked you of your faith? When's the last time anybody ever asked you, “Say, what makes you different?”

There was a cynic named Nietzsche. Hitler learned much from Nietzsche. Nietzsche didn't believe in Jesus Christ and he loved to look in Christians' face and sneer at them and say, “If you want me to believe in your Redeemer, you're going to have to look a little more redeemed.” Hmmm?

Well, do you look redeemed? I mean, when's the last time somebody's ever said, “Hey, what makes you tick? What puts that smile on your face? What gives you peace in the midst of the storm? What motivates you, what drives you, how do you have this hope?” Would you be able to give an answer? Would you shine as a bright light in a dark place?

I want to mention six things that Peter mentions right here, things that we need to be in this dark day. Number one, we must enthrone Christ as Lord. Look in First Peter 3 verse 15, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.” The word sanctify means to set Him aside as special, above all, as reigning Lord. May I ask you a personal question? Don't say yes, because I'm going to ask it anyway. Is Jesus Christ Lord in your life? Now, I didn't say, “Do you admit that He is Lord” in the generic sense. Have you ever bowed the knee to Him? Have you ever taken the crown off your head and put it upon His head?

There was a preacher of yesteryear; his name was Charles Spurgeon. Most preachers agree together that Charles Spurgeon was probably the greatest preacher outside the apostle Paul that ever lived. I've copied down something that Charles Haddon Spurgeon said. I want you to listen to it carefully; I'm going to read it carefully. Here's what he said, “If the professed convert distinctly and deliberately declares that he knows the Lord's will, but does not mean to attend to it, you are not to pamper his presumptions. But it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved.” If a man says, “Well, I know what God wants me to do, but I'm not going to do it,” Spurgeon just says, “Mister, you need to be saved.” “Do not suppose that the Gospel is magnified or God glorified by pandering to the worldlings and telling them that they may be saved at this moment by simply,” quote-unquote, “accepting Christ as their Savior while they are still wedded to their idols and their hearts are still in love with sin. It is interesting to note that the apostles preached the Lordship of Christ. The word Savior occurs only twice in the Acts of the Apostles. On the other hand, it is amazing to notice that the title Lord is mentioned 92 times.”

Now, often we hear people say, “Well, you need to accept Christ as your Savior.” Well, friend, you cannot have what He gives unless you accept who He is, and He is Lord. He's Lord. Now, I'm not asking, “Are you a member of a church?” I'm not asking, “Are you baptized?” I'm not asking you, “Do



you know the plan of salvation?" You're not saved by the plan of salvation. You're saved by the man of salvation; His name is Jesus. Is He the Lord of your life?

Imagine this scene. The wedding, the marriage has taken place. The cake has been cut. The gifts have been exchanged. And Susan and John now are in the car driving away; they've just been married. Susan says, "John, would you please take me home?" And he says, "Well now, Susan, we're going on our honeymoon. You know that our home is not going to be ready for several weeks. I'll take you there when the contractor's finish building the house." She says, "No, I don't mean that home. Would you please take me to my mother's house? I want to go back to my mother's house. Now John, I want you to understand something. You and I are married, and John, I appreciate your love for me. And John, if you have any love for me, don't fail to give it. I'm most grateful for it. And John, if I have a need, if I get sick, I'll call on you. And if I need money for expenses, because you're my husband, I expect you to supply my every need! But don't think that I'm going to change my lifestyle just because I'm married to you. John, take me home and keep your hands off of my life!" Now what kind of a marriage would that be?

That's the same kind of salvation that some people think they have. They call upon the Lord Jesus Christ and say, "Now Lord Jesus, thank You that you're going to take care of me, but I'm going back to my old lifestyle, I'm going back to my old ways. Take your hands off my life." Friend, you can't have it that way. You can't have it that way. Has there been a radical change in your life? Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your life?

Number two, not only must you sanctify the Lord, but number two, we must be ready with an answer. Look in First Peter 3 verse 15, "But sanctify the Lord in your hearts, be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you of the reason of the hope that is in you." Are you ready for an answer? I mean, suppose somebody came to you and said, "What is the reason for your hope?" And they will come to you if you have a changed life. They're going to ask you, as they did on the Day of Pentecost, in Acts 2 verse 12, "What meaneth this, what meaneth this?" Now, the problem is that, and then they ask, "What must we do?" The reason that many people don't ask, "What must we do," they haven't seen anything that is different; they can't say, "What means this?" On the Day of Pentecost there was something that was not explainable.

Is there something about you that is not explainable? Can you explain my life, the life of these men, apart from Jesus Christ? Friend, has anybody ever asked you a question, "What is the reason for your hope?" Suppose somebody today, maybe in an automobile accident, would ask you, "What is the reason for your hope? Help me." You'd say, "Just stay right there; don't die, I'm going to go get Pastor Rogers." No, you are to sanctify the Lord in your heart and you are to be ready.

I'm appalled at how little the average Baptist knows about what he's supposed to believe. One man asked a woman, "What do you believe?" She said, "I believe what my church believes." "Well, what does your church believe?" "Well, my church believes what I believe." "Well, what do you both



believe?" "Oh, we believe the same thing." Are you ready, do you have an answer? Friend, there are some good answers.

The word, "to give an answer" is the word that we get our word apologetics from. Doesn't mean that we're saying, "Oh, I'm so sorry." It's a word that is used in a courtroom, apologia. It means to give a defense of your faith, just as a lawyer would defend a client. Can you defend your faith? I want to tell you something, friend, the people out there have some big questions. Right now our world is swimming in questions.

Somebody wrote a letter to the editor of a local newspaper concerning something that I'd said. This is his question. He said, "Rogers claims, as other Christians have, that while their all-powerful, all-loving, all-knowing God knew what was going to happen on September the eleventh and had the power to protect innocent, human life, He did not. But they claim He did act in some small ways to comfort people." And then this man said, "They can't have it both ways. Either their God could act and chose not to, or He did not have the power or will to do so. Either way, their God is not so all-powerful or all-loving."

Now what he has done, he's gone back to an argument that every sophomore in any secular university is used to. And here's their little syllogism. They say, "If God were all good, He would destroy evil. If God were all powerful, He could destroy evil. But evil is not destroyed, hence there is no such God." That's their logic. Listen to it again. "If God were all good, He would destroy evil. If He were all powerful, He could destroy evil. But evil is not destroyed. Hence, there is no such God."

Well, suppose somebody were to ask you that question. Believe me, it's being asked today. And somebody says, "How can you have faith in God?" Are you ready to give an answer to the person who asked you? Well, there's an answer in the Word of God. Let me give you some Scripture. Matthew chapter 22 beginning in verse 36 and 37. There was a lawyer who asked Jesus, "Master, what is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said, "Thou shalt love," underscore this, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Friend, that is it, that's the bottom line. By the way, the faith of Jesus Christ is built on love, not hate; life, not death. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy being. This is the first commandment." This sums it all up.

Now, when God made man, God made man a free creature. Why did God make man a free creature? Because God wanted man to love: to love Him and to love one another. Forced love is a contradiction in terms. For a person to be able to love, he has to be able not to love. If we were created where we could only love and do nothing else, it wouldn't be love at all. We would be automatons; we would just simply be machines. God gave man the freedom of choice. We cannot choose to be disloyal unless we can choose to be loyal. We cannot choose to love unless we can choose not to love.

And what is love? Love is the highest good. And for God to take away choice would be for God to destroy the highest good, and if He did that, if God were to destroy evil, that is, to give man a choice, then that act itself would be evil. No, God allows evil in this world: and taking that sin into His own



heart and His own life. And there are answers to these things. The Bible says in John chapter 15 verse 13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Now, thirdly, listen, friend, if we would be a bright light in a dark world, we must practice genuine humility. This is no time to strut in arrogance. Notice again what Peter says in First Peter chapter 3 verse 15, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you of a reason of the hope that is in you," now notice this, "with meekness and fear." With meekness and fear. Meekness is not weakness, it is strength under control. Fear is not trembling at what is happening around us; it speaks of a holy reverence for Almighty God.

Now you can have the reasons, but America's not going to be won by arguments alone, not by the ballot box, not by organization and there's so many people who think of those of us who are Bible-believers as people of arrogance. They'll say that about us. They'll think of us as hate-mongers. They will think of us as intolerant and we must be very careful that we do not use angry rhetoric when we respond to them. Listen to this Scripture; put it in your margin. James 1 verses 19 through 20, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Your anger, your wrath does not bring about God's righteousness.

Now Jesus showed anger against those who were persecuting helpless people. He showed anger toward the religious hypocrites of His day. But to those who were victims of sin, the prostitutes, the thieves, the tax gatherers who in that day were guilty of extortion, He showed them love. He was a friend of sinners. That's why they crucified Him. Do you know what we need in this day and this age? We, dear friend, need a full heart and a bright head, both together. Be ready to give an answer, but also show love in genuine humility.

Now, when this was written, Nero was the emperor. You say, "Well, they had it easier in those days." Oh, no they didn't. Nero wanted to remodel Rome, so he had the slums burned. The people rose up because their homes were destroyed. He had to have a scapegoat. Somebody said, "Why don't you blame it on those Christians? They're always talking about setting the world on fire." And so they blamed it on the Christians. And again, as I said, it was open season on the Christians. They would take Christians in that day, nail them to crosses, cover them with boiling oil, and set them on fire to light the gardens for their banquets. Can you imagine such a thing? These are people; these are people who love the Lord Jesus Christ. They reddened the mouths of lions with their own blood. They had to fight with gladiators in the Coliseum. Many of them would not fight; they would just simply give their lives. I wonder what would happen to some of us if we had to make those kind of choices. These early Christians, friend, they had to make those kinds of choices and I want to say that they had meekness and fear and their humility, their humility, their ability to suffer for Christ, brought that Roman empire crashing down.

Now folks, it's possible for us to be so arrogant that we'll win the argument and lose the audience. I'm calling upon you to have genuine meekness, genuine reverence in this day and in this age. This is not the time to go pointing fingers at everybody else. The Bible says in First Peter 4 verse 17, "The time has come, but judgment must begin at the house of God." And I tell you, folks, all that's



happened in America today, has happened on our watch. And we need to confess the sins of the church. We need to confess our indolence, our laziness, our selfishness, our pride, our refusal to live a separated life and to share the Gospel, the glorious Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Number four, we must live, if we would be a bright light in a dark world, we must live a superior lifestyle, a superior lifestyle. Notice the next verse; we've been in verse 15, look in First Peter 3 verse 16, "Having a good conscience, whereas they that speak evil of you as evildoers may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." You're going to be falsely accused, but it's going to become evident, it's going to be to their shame because your lifestyle will be superior. You will be blameless. I didn't say sinless, but you will be blameless. You see, verse 15 says they're going to be asking us questions of the hope that's in us. Why? Because they can see something different about us.

Go back, the chapter before this, First Peter chapter 2 and verse 12. Listen to what he says, "Having your conversation," and the word conversation in the Old King James Scripture always means behavior, "Having your behavior honest among the Gentiles that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." That is, when Jesus comes again, when the Daystar rises, they're going to have to say, "Those Christians were living a superior lifestyle." God forbid that you, I, any of us, could be a part of any scandal. People are to see this church, and they're to see your life, at school, in the neighborhood, on the job, you should stand out like a diamond in a coal mine, like a gardenia in a garbage can. You should be different. We need to out-love, out-live, out-give, out-pray, out-witness the people of this world, Amen? Are you willing to do it? We have to sacrifice them.

You want them to believe in us? What we believe in? If you want respect, we're going to have to get it the old-fashioned way: we must earn it. Let them see your good works. When we begin to live this way, others will begin to ask us, "What makes you tick? What is the reason for the hope that is in you?"

What happened to Paul and Silas when they were in that prison, that Philippian jail at midnight? Other people around them were cursing, moaning, screaming. Paul and Silas were praying. They were singing praise to God, giving God thanks. Everybody in the prison saw there was a difference. What do you think made that Philippian jailer come in there after that earthquake and say, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He would never have asked them that question if they'd been cursing and complaining. No, they were praising God. There was something different about their lifestyle in the midst of tribulation. I've told you before, the Bible doesn't say that if you're saved you'll not have tribulation. You may get cast into prison. And in prison we need to be a bright light in a dark place; that's what Paul and Silas were doing. And that's the reason in Acts chapter 16 verses 30 and 31 that man said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Remember what Nietzsche said? "If you want me to believe in your Redeemer, you're going to have to look a little more redeemed."

Number five, number five; we must display genuine love. Look in First Peter chapter 4 now, verses 8 and 9, listen, "And above all things, have fervent charity," the King James says charity; it means love, "among yourselves, for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging." I think of the tragedy, the despicable thing that was done to our nation



on September the eleventh. It wasn't based on love, it was based on hate. Now, that's terrible, but I'll tell you one thing, one thing it does, that is the dark velvet upon which the diamond of God's grace and God's love can be seen. That gives us an opportunity to respond in love. I'm calling this church to love.

We are against abortion in this church because we believe that abortion is the shedding of innocent blood. But what are we doing for the teenage girl, the person who's caught in a situation with a baby and they need help? Do we turn our backs on these people? Or do we show them love? We can turn our backs on them and shove them into the arms of the abortionist who's looking for a few more hundred dollars for performing an abortion.

We believe in this church in the permanency of marriage. We believe that one man is to be married to one woman till death do them part. But there're many people whose homes have been broken by divorce, severed by divorce. What do we do? Do we wrap our robes of self-righteousness about them and turn them away and say, "You're second class, no good, you've made a mistake, there's no hope for you and no help for you?" No! In the name of Jesus we open our arms and say, "You're welcome here. We have a message for you in the name of the Lord Jesus."

We're against pornography. It's terrible, it's horrible, it's a vice, vile, filthy. It is antithetical to true love; it's based on lust. Lust wants to get; love wants to give. But there are so many today and especially with the tidal wave of slime that's coming in through the internet. We're caught up in pornography. What do we do to these people? Do we step on them? Or do we offer help to people who are driven to such a compulsion, and do we say to them in love, "We love you and there's an answer in the Lord Jesus Christ."

We're against the homosexual agenda; we believe that it's contrary to the Word of God and contrary to human health and welfare, but what do we do to those who are caught up in this lifestyle? Do we merely criticize them, put them down? Or do we reach down the loving hand, so that love can lift and give a help. Friend, this is the day, this is the age where the church needs to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ.

If we would be bright lights in a dark world, we need to be known, not merely for what we're against, but what we're for. The newspaper delights in printing anytime we take a stand against sin. That's bold headlines. Friend, what we need is an explosion of random acts of love and they can see the love of Jesus Christ.

Number six, we must always hold on to hope. We must always hold on to hope. Look again in First Peter 3 verse 15, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you of a reason of the hope that is in you." The hope that is in you. Now the word "hope" here does not mean mere wish, fond desire, but it means rock-ribbed truth based on the Word of God. Divine certainty based on the Word of God. And friend, listen to me, I don't care how dark the day is, you listen, we're on the winning side. Sin can't win, faith cannot fail. Have faith in God. I know that many of us just sat in horror as we watched over and over and over again those twin towers collapse.

Augustine was one of the early church fathers, lived many, many years ago. Augustine was told that Rome had been sacked. I guess that modern America is the closest counterpart to ancient



Rome. Ancient Rome was the most powerful force on Earth and the vandals came and sacked Rome, destroyed Rome. Augustine is reported to have said this, listen to it. "Whatever men build, men will destroy. Let's get on with building the kingdom of God." "Whatever men build, men will destroy." If you put all of your eggs in brick and stone and mortar and computers and technological advance, friend, you're only living for the moment.

I don't want you to think that I'm un-American, because you're looking at a red-blooded American patriot. But our job is not to ultimately save America. Our job is not to preserve our lifestyle or our freedoms. Oh, we must do that. God helping us, we will do that. But our main responsibility is to stand for Jesus Christ here and around the world and put our hope, our faith, our prayers in something that cannot fail, a kingdom that cannot be shaken! That, friend, is our hope. That is the hope that is in me.

Now, you say, "Well, Adrian, evidently then you're a little discouraged by the way things are going." Friend, I'm not discouraged at all. I want to share with you some of the most optimistic news I've ever shared from this pulpit. I want to tell you what God is doing in the world and I pray that this will ignite in you a flame of hope that cannot be extinguished.

Bill Bright founded Campus Crusade for Christ just about the time that I came to this church, just a little before that, not much before that. And he and his precious wife Vonette. Campus Crusade reported that their staff has exploded to twenty-five thousand missionaries and they have more than five hundred and fifty-three thousand volunteers. Did you hear that? Five hundred and fifty-three thousand volunteers. Campus Crusade generated and then showed the Jesus Film around the world. Seven hundred and fifty-thousand churches, seven hundred and fifty-thousand churches have begun.

Now let me read to you a little bit from the Newsweek magazine. April the sixteenth, 2001. This is speaking of Africa. "All across the African sub-continent, Christianity is a twenty-four/seven experience." That means 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, "On decaying asphalt highways, the backs of trucks and buses proclaim Christian slogans: 'In His Name,' 'Abide With Me,' 'God Is Good.' Inside urban malls the lilting pop music carries an upbeat Christian message in Ibo, Twi and Swahili. Even the signs above the storefronts bear witness: "Thy Will Be Done Hair Salon.' 'The Lord Is My Light Car Wash.' And 'Trust In God Auto Repair, Specialists in Mercedes Benz.'" This article, now this is Newsweek. Listen to this. It says that, "The thousand tribes that occupy the world's second largest continent, in these tribes, Christianity is spreading faster than at any time or place in the last two thousand years." That's in Africa.

Dr. James Kennedy that we know and love said this, and I want to quote him, "We are in the midst of the greatest ingathering into the kingdom in the history of the world." And then Dr. Kennedy quotes a study giving the approximate number of converts per day worldwide beginning in the year 100. "In the year 100, it is estimated there were 100 converts a day. By the year 1900 it had risen to 943 per day. By the year 1950, 4,500 a day were coming to Christ. By 1980, 20,000 a day were



coming to Christ. By 1995, 100,000 a day were coming to Christ. By the year 2000 the projected is," projected thing was when this was written, "200,000 a day coming to Jesus Christ." Think of it.

Dr. Tim Lahaye, gave a report printed in Time magazine. Tim Lahaye said that the revival that's going on in China today may be the greatest ingathering in the history of the world.

Now friend, I'm just sharing with you some news. I'm sharing with you some good news. I am sharing with you that more souls are coming to Jesus Christ in this day and in this age than ever, ever, ever since Jesus Christ in His sandaled shoes walked the shores of Galilee. Is that not good news? Praise God. And what I'm saying is this; we don't need to hunker down in a corner. We need to go out with a banner unfurled and march under the blood-stained banner of Prince Emmanuel, our Savior, our King, our Lord. God is our source of supply. The Holy Spirit is our ally. Jesus is our Commander in Chief. We're brothers and sisters in Christ in this mighty army of love, and may God help us in this day and in this age to be bright lights in a dark world. Amen and Amen.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, friend, remember I told you about God's amazing grace; that God wants to save you? Why should there be a mighty revival in Africa and not one in your heart here today? Why should souls around the world be coming to Jesus and you be left out when Jesus died for you? Would you like to be saved? I'm telling you, you can be saved today if you'll receive Jesus Christ.

Would you pray a prayer like this? "Oh, God, thank You for loving me. Thank You, Lord, for loving me in spite of my sin. Jesus, thank You for paying for my sin with Your blood. Oh, thank You for doing that. I believe You're the Son of God, I believe You walked out of that grave. I believe You paid my sin debt with Your blood. And now, Lord Jesus, I receive You into my heart. I yield my life over to You. I acknowledge You as Lord, trust You as my Redeemer. Forgive my sin, cleanse me, cleanse me, Lord, save me. Take control of my life and begin now to make me what You want me to be. I'm so weak, Lord, but You're strong. And Lord, I'm going to give my heart to You, and then You're going to have to start working on me, Lord, because, Lord, I'm weak. But Lord, You'll do it. I just trust You, I give You my heart. Save me, Lord Jesus. Do it right now. Give me the courage to make it public. In Your name I pray, Amen."





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