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A Lifestyle for the Last Days

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# A Lifestyle for the Last Days

As children of God, we live in hostile territory occupied by the father of lies. All who will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 1 Peter is a handbook for our survival. In this message, Adrian Rogers reveals a lifestyle of truth for the last days as identified in 1 Peter 3.



# A Lifestyle for the Last Days

As children of God, we live in hostile territory. All who will live for Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 1 Peter is a handbook for our survival; it reveals a lifestyle for the last days.

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. ‘And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.’”

The first distinction of our lifestyle is a settled lordship; verse 15 goes on, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts...” To sanctify means to set apart; it means we don’t mix God with anything else. It is settled in our hearts that Jesus is Lord.

Adrian Rogers says, “You cannot have what He gives unless you accept what He is.”

Second, we have a solid logic. Continuing in verse 15, we read, “...and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you...” The world has some good questions about our faith; we must be ready to give an answer. We have to study His Word for ourselves, for our faith will be assaulted on all sides in these last days.

Third, again in verse 15, we must have a superior lifestyle: “...with meekness and fear...” Meekness is not weakness; it is strength under control. In this context, fear is reverence, not cringing dread. Our logic and our lifestyle has to go together—a full mind wedded with a loving heart. We are supposed to be people of meekness and reverence for our God; wise in our conduct and speech.

Fourth, we are known by our steadfast love; “...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).

Adrian Rogers says, “Our love should stand out like a diamond on the bright velvet of hostility, debauchery, wickedness and hatred.” Our churches need love, not only for one another, but love for the lost.

Finally, we have a satisfied longing; Jesus has met the deepest needs of our hearts, therefore we have hope.



# A Lifestyle for the Last Days

**SERMON REFERENCE:** 1 Peter 3:13-16

## 1) INTRODUCTION

- a) All who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.
  - i) If you're not suffering persecution, it's because you're not living godly in Christ Jesus.
- b) If you are a child of God, then you are living in hostile territory.
  - i) We are twice-born people in a world of once-born people.
  - ii) We will be going against the tide most of the time.
  - iii) What we believe and how we live starts at a different source, it follows a different course and it is headed toward a different conclusion.
- c) Persecution against Christians happened in the Apostle Peter's time, as well.
  - i) What Peter said to those saints then is what God is saying to us now.
  - ii) 1 Peter 3:13-16
- d) In Peter's day, the saints of God were accused of all manner of things.
  - i) They were accused of subversion against the government because they would not say that Caesar was Lord.
    - (1) They said that Jesus Christ is Lord.
  - ii) They were accused of being an economic threat because they preached against idolatry.
    - (1) Idolatry in that day was a great source of income.
    - (2) In the book of Acts, we read where Paul encountered this opposition in Ephesus.
  - iii) They were persecuted because they lived a different lifestyle than the pagans.
- e) The book of 1 Peter is a handbook for survival.
  - i) 1 Peter 3:13-16 shows us not only how to survive but how to thrive.
- f) A lifestyle for the last days is not to simply hunker down and sing, "Hold the Fort".
  - i) We cannot hunker down.
    - (1) We need to sing, "Onward Christian Soldiers."
  - ii) Neither can we run because there is no place to run to today.
- g) In America today, we still have some freedoms.
  - i) But there may come a time when there may not be anyone to speak up for us if we don't speak up for ourselves and for others.
- h) In our Scripture today, Peter says that we have to be real.
  - i) 1 Peter 3:13
    - (1) The word "followers" is the word from which we get the word "zealot."
      - (a) It refers to someone who is zealous for that which is good.
      - (b) It is someone who is on fire for the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - ii) Are you zealous for the Lord Jesus?



- i) Peter also says that we must be ready.
  - i) 1 Peter 3:15
  - ii) When was the last time someone asked you about your faith?
  - iii) When was the last time that someone asked what is different about you?
  - iv) Has anyone ever asked you what the reason is for your hope?
- j) In Peter's day there was persecution, and in our day, there will be persecution.
  - i) They will call us intolerant.
    - (1) We are considered intolerant if we say that there is one way to Heaven and a fixed standard of right and wrong.
    - (2) We will be called a part of the religious right if we say that Jesus is the only way to Heaven.
      - (a) The answer is not right or left but right or wrong.
  - ii) If we stand up for that which is right, we will be called bigoted, fundamentalists, intolerant and narrow minded.
- k) In today's message, we will find a lifestyle for the last days.

## 2) SETTLED LORDSHIP (1 PETER 3:15)

- a) Absolutely nothing must stand in our way of our loyalty to Jesus Christ.
- b) 1 Peter 3:15
  - i) The word "sanctify" means to set Him apart.
    - (1) We set Him apart as Lord.
- c) If you have not once and for all, now and forever, settled the question of Lordship, settle it today.
  - i) He is Lord.
  - ii) Is Jesus Christ your Lord?
- d) Charles Spurgeon said that if the professed convert declares that he knows the Lord's will but does not intend to do it, then it is our duty to assure him that he is not saved.
  - i) Luke 6:46
- e) The apostles preached the Lordship of Christ.
  - i) The word "Savior" occurs only twice in the book of Acts, while the title "Lord" is mentioned 92 times.
  - ii) We cannot have what He gives unless we accept what He is.
    - (1) He is Lord.
  - iii) Acts 16:31
- f) There are many who want Jesus Christ as Savior but not as Lord.
  - i) They will call upon Him if they get into trouble or difficulty.
  - ii) If the weather is good, they may go to church.
- g) We must sanctify Jesus Christ as Lord.

## 3) A SOLID LOGIC (1 PETER 3:15)

- a) 1 Peter 3:15
  - i) The word "answer" here is the word from which we get our word "apologetics."
    - (1) In theology, apologetics is a reason, a defense of our faith.
- b) 2 Timothy 2:15



- i) We are to study to show ourselves approved unto God.
- c) Many Christians should be ashamed of the weakness and shallowness of their faith.
  - i) They understand so little.
  - ii) Many don't know how to share their faith.
  - iii) They are not ready to give an answer for the hope that is within them.
    - (1) We need to sharpen up on our faith.
- d) College students need to know what they believe in and why they believe it.
  - i) Their faith will be assaulted in these last days.
  - ii) They need a solid logic.
- e) We need to be able to speak up for the Lord Jesus on the job, in society, in politics and in schools, and to do so reasonably with a solid logic.
  - i) This does not mean to argue with unreasonable people.
    - (1) The Bible warns against this.
      - (a) Proverbs 26:4
      - (b) Matthew 7:6
- f) We are to share our faith.
  - i) God gives us wonderful answers.
  - ii) There needs to be a sanctified, divine logic in our answers.
  - iii) 2 Timothy 2:24-25
    - (1) The phrase "must not strive" means don't argue or debate.
    - (2) God has to give them repentance.
      - (a) We will never argue someone into the Kingdom of Heaven, but we need to give an answer if we want them to believe.
- g) One age-old argument that we will face is why God does not destroy evil.
  - i) Some people say that if God were all good, then He would destroy evil.
    - (1) If He were all powerful, then He could destroy evil.
    - (2) Evil is not destroyed, therefore, there is no God that is all powerful or all good.
  - ii) This argument, though, is faulty.
    - (1) God could not destroy evil without destroying freedom.
    - (2) A person has to choose to be disloyal in order to be loyal.
    - (3) A person has to choose not to love in order to love.
      - (a) Forced love is a contradiction in terms and not love at all.
      - (b) Matthew 22:36-37
        - (i) We cannot love God without the freedom to choose to love God.
    - (4) If God were to destroy evil and force love, then there is no love at all.
    - (5) So, to destroy evil would be to take away the opportunity to choose, which would be in itself an act of evil.
  - iii) The great question is not, "Why doesn't God destroy evil?"
  - iv) The great question is how could God love us so much that He would allow His Son to die on a cross to save us from our sins.
  - v) These types of questions ought to cause us to go to the Word and see what the Bible teaches.
- h) Get in the Word of God and study to show yourself approved.



- i) Some people say that they can't learn, but they can.
  - (1) It's a matter of motivation.
    - (a) People learn what they want to learn, and they know what they want to know.

#### 4) A SUPERIOR LIFESTYLE (1 PETER 3:15)

- a) Why would anyone ask you about your faith?
  - i) Because of your lifestyle; when they see your superior lifestyle.
- b) 1 Peter 3:15
  - i) Meekness is strength under control.
    - (1) The Roman army was called meek.
    - (2) Moses was called the meekest man that ever lived.
      - (a) Numbers 12:3
      - (b) Moses certainly wasn't weak.
    - (3) Matthew 11:29
  - ii) Fear does not mean cringing dread.
    - (1) It means reverence.
- c) When others see us with lives under control in a chaotic age, then they know that there is a difference.
- d) Sadly, some people don't see many Christians with meekness and reverence.
  - i) They think of us as hate mongers or arrogant.
    - (1) Angry rhetoric is not the answer.
  - ii) James 1:19-20
    - (1) Our speech should be seasoned with salt, and a full mind needs to be wedded to a loving heart.
    - (2) The logic and the lifestyle have to go together.
- e) 1 Peter 2:21-23
  - i) Peter wrote this when Nero was the emperor.
    - (1) Nero took Christians and poured oil and hot tar on them, nailed them to crosses, and then set them on fire and used them to light their gardens.
    - (2) The Roman Empire was turned upside down and the Gospel of Christ spread because of the ability of these Christians to suffer righteously, as the Lord Jesus gave us an example.
- f) We can win an argument but lose the audience.
  - i) We need to use the logic and the love and turn that into a lifestyle.
  - ii) True humility will disarm those who oppose us.
- g) Paul and Silas were thrown into prison for preaching the Gospel in Philippi.
  - i) Acts 16:22-33
  - ii) There was an earthquake, and the prison doors were shaken loose.
    - (1) The shackles fell from the hands and legs of Paul, Silas and all of the other prisoners.
  - iii) None of the prisoners tried to escape.
  - iv) The jailer had heard Paul and Silas at midnight praising God and praying.
  - v) The jailer asked what he must do to be saved.
    - (1) He saw something in Paul and Silas that he had never seen before.



## 5) A STEADFAST LOVE (1 PETER 4:8-9)

- a) 1 Peter 4:8-9
  - i) We should have a steadfast love in our churches that stands out against the hostility, wickedness and hatred that's in the world.
- b) Our churches need love, not only for one another, but also for the lost.
  - i) We need to show love for those who are broken by sin.
  - ii) We will not lower the standard of what God says is right and wrong, but we need to show love to those who have participated in abortion.
  - iii) We believe in the permanency of marriage, but we need to show love to those who have been broken by divorce.
  - iv) Those whose minds have become twisted and tortured with the pollution of pornography need our help and love.
  - v) Those caught up in the homosexual lifestyle need Jesus, and they're not going to be saved by our self-righteousness.
    - (1) We will preach against abortion, divorce, adultery and sin.
    - (2) But the only way to reach this world and our cities is to sanctify the Lord in our hearts, be ready always to give an answer for the hope that is within us, to have a lifestyle that is different, and to be soaked and saturated with a genuine, steadfast love.

## 6) A SATISFIED LONGING (1 PETER 3:15)

- a) 1 Peter 3:15
- b) Hope is a longing that is satisfied.
  - i) It is more than certainty.
  - ii) It is faith transformed into reality in our hearts and lives.
    - (1) Faith is rooted in reason but goes beyond reason.
    - (2) Faith becomes its own best reason, and the Bible calls that hope.
- c) The world is wondering if there is hope and an answer.
  - i) The answer is Jesus.
  - ii) We need to demonstrate that the Bible is true, the Holy Spirit is real and that there is hope in Christ.
    - (1) We need to have in our own hearts a satisfied longing that Jesus has met the deepest needs of our hearts.
- d) Though we love our nation and freedom, our job is not ultimately to save America or to preserve our freedom.
  - i) Our responsibility is to stand up for Jesus Christ and to be a witness for His grace and power with unshakeable hope.

## 7) CONCLUSION

- a) It is never too late for God.
- b) We need a lifestyle for these last days.
  - i) We need to settle it once and for all, now and forever, that Jesus Christ is Lord.
  - ii) We need to understand what we believe and why we believe it.
  - iii) As God's people, we need to live like God's people and live a superior lifestyle so that





- others can see a difference in us.
- iv) We need to show genuine, Christ-like love.
    - (1) We won't overlook sin and we won't compromise, but we will love others to Jesus.
  - v) We need to do all of this with a settled hope in our hearts, a satisfied longing that Jesus has met the deepest needs of our lives.
  - c) God has called us, anointed us, and equipped us to do what we ought to do.
  - d) If you're not saved today, God wants to save you.
    - i) And He will save you if you will trust Him.
  - e) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
  - f) 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



# A Lifestyle for the Last Days

**SERMON REFERENCE:** 1 Peter 3:13-16

Find God's precious Word, First Peter chapter 3. And when you found it, let me tell you something that you may know. If you don't know, you need to know. It is open season on Christians.

Now you may not understand that because of your lifestyle; nobody can tell that you are one. But, listen, "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Second Timothy 3:12. If you're not suffering any it's just plain ipso facto that you are not living godly in Christ Jesus. If you are a child of God you're living in hostile territory. We're twice born people in a world of once born people and we're going to be going against the tide most of the time. What we believe and how we live starts at a different source, it follows a different course. It is headed toward a different conclusion. It is an open season on Christians.

But this is not the first time that has ever happened. It happened in Peter's time. And I want you to see what the apostle Peter said to those saints then because it's what God is saying to us now. First Peter chapter 3 verse 13 through verse 16, "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; 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 of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation," or behavior, "in Jesus Christ."

Now I want to tell you again, in Peter's day there were those who were opposing the saints of God. And they accused them of all manner of things. They accused them, for example, of subversion against the government because they would not say that Caesar's Lord, they said that Jesus Christ is Lord. They accused them of being economic threat because they preached against idolatry. And idolatry in that day was not only a subject of religion, it was a great source of income. You can see that for example if you read in the book of Acts, the trouble that Paul got in to at Ephesus.

Also, their lifestyles; the lifestyles of the Christians accused and condemned the pagans because Christians lived a different lifestyle. And by comparison they rebuked the immorality of that day.

Now the book of First Peter, really, is a handbook for survival. And so therefore you need to be aware of it. And the book of First Peter and particularly this passage that I'm speaking from teaches you not only how to survive, but how to thrive.



Now, I want to talk to you to about “A Lifestyle for the Last Days.” Now a lifestyle is not simply to hunker down and begin to sing, “Hold the fort.” We need to be militant, reaching out singing not “hold the fort” but “Onward Christian Soldiers.” You cannot hunker down, nor can you run because today there’s no place to run to. It’s very similar as it was in the days of the Nazis in Germany. There was a pastor there, Martin Niemöller, Martin Niemöller stood up against Hitler and he was put in prison. Later he was put in a concentration camp. After the war he was released, but he went around talking about how he failed to stand up and speak up when he could and when he should and this is what he said. And I want you to listen to it. These words have been repeated often. He said, “First they came for the socialists and I did not speak up because I was not a socialist. And then they came for the trade unionists. But I did not speak up because I was not a trade unionist. And then he said, “Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak up because I was not a Jew.” And then he said, “Then they came for me and by that time there was nobody left to speak up for anybody.” Now folks, we do still have some freedoms in America today. We still have a time to speak. We still have a time to let our voice be known. But before long, there may not be anybody to speak up for us if we don’t speak up for ourselves and speak up for others.

Now Peter says in this passage of Scripture that we have to be real and we have to be ready. He says, for example in First Peter 3 verse 13, “Who is he that will harm you if you be followers of that which is good?” The word “followers” is the word we get “zealot” from. It means if you are zealous for that which is good. Not just a Sunday morning bench warmer, not a ho-hum Christian, not a casual Christian, but somebody who’s on fire for the Lord Jesus Christ with a burning, blazing, passionately, emotional love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to ask you a question? Are you zealous? Are you zealous for the Lord Jesus Christ? And then, not only must we be real, but we must be ready. 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 the reason of the hope that’s in you.”

Question: when’s the last time anybody ever asked you about your faith? When’s the last time anybody looked at you and said, “Man, you’re different. How are you wired? What makes you tick? How is it that you can live the lifestyle that you live? What is there about you that is different?”

There was a philosopher whose name was Nietzsche. Nietzsche lived in the time of Hitler and Nietzsche was a student of Darwin. He was anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Bible. And Nietzsche was a wicked, vile man. He used to ridicule Christians. And here’s what he said to Christians. He said, “If you want me to believe in your Redeemer, you’re going to have to look a little more Redeemed.” Hmm! Do you look redeemed? Has anybody ever said to you, “What is the reason for your hope? Where’d you get this belief that you have?”

Now, remember that in that day there was persecution. And in the day in which we live there will be persecution. Now what’s the persecution going to be? Well number one, they’re going to call you intolerant. If you say, “There’s one way to Heaven, there’s a fixed standard of right and wrong,” you will be intolerant in this day. And the one sin this world will not tolerate with their vindictiveness against intolerance is our fact, our belief that there is but one way to Heaven and His name is Jesus.



We will be called a part of the religious right. As if there is a religious left and a religious right. Friend, the answer is not right or left. The answer is right or wrong. And if we stand up for that which is right we're going to be called bigoted. We're going to be called fundamentalists. We're going to be called intolerant. We're going to be called narrow minded.

Now with that in mind, let's look at this passage of Scripture and see if we can find what will be a lifestyle for the last days. For my heart, for your heart, for this beloved church that we might reach this city and hopefully reach our world with the message of Jesus Christ.

First of all, **a settled lordship**. Look if you will now in First Peter chapter 3 verse 15, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." A settled lordship. Nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing must stand in your way of your loyalty to Jesus Christ.

What does the word "sanctify" mean? It means to set Him apart. How do you set Him apart? As Lord. You don't mix Him in with anything else. He is sanctified, set apart as Lord. And that has to be settled in your heart. If you have not once and for all, now and forever, settled the question of Lordship; settle it! He is Lord! Is He your Lord? Now don't answer out loud, but answer in your heart. Is Jesus Christ Lord?

Charles Hadden Spurgeon said this and I want you to listen to it because these are rich words. 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."

For example, if there's somebody, this is not Spurgeon, this is Adrian here. There's a big difference. But if there's somebody who says, "I know that I ought to be baptized by immersion. I know that Jesus wants it, the Bible teaches it. But I'm not going to do it." By what right do you have to call yourself a Christian? Jesus Christ said, "Why call ye Me Lord, Lord and do not the things that I say?" Luke chapter 6 and verse 46.

Listen to it, "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. Do you 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 'accepting Christ as their Savior' while they are still wedded to the idols and their hearts are still in love with sin? It is interesting to note that the apostles preach 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." Is Christ your Lord? Precious friend, you cannot have what He gives unless you accept what He is. And He is Lord. The Bible says in Acts 16 verse 31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

Let's just imagine this scene. The wedding is over, the cake has been cut. The guests have gone. The new couple get in their automobile and they go off. And she says to him as she moves over to her side of the car away from him. "John, take me home." He says, "Now darling, you know we can't go home. Our house won't be finished for three weeks, we're going on our honeymoon."



She says, “No, no, no, no. Take me to my mother’s home, back where I was. Now John, I want you to understand that I accepted you as my husband. And I’m grateful for your love for me. But I want you to take me back to my home, back to my old lifestyle. Now John, if I need you, if I have some difficulty I will call on you. And I will try to visit with you at least once a week. And I expect you to take care of my needs. But John, I have given you my life in the fact that I took you as my husband. But John, don’t expect me to change my lifestyle.”

Now friend, listen, a lot have done exactly that to Jesus. “Oh, I’ve accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior. And if I get in trouble, if I get in difficulty, I’ll call upon Him. And if the weather’s good and I’m feeling right, I just may come to church, to His house and visit Him.” Don’t you think that it is time for all of us, those of us who name the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to sanctify Him as Lord? He’s Lord. He’s absolute Lord. So that’s the first thing, that’s the first thing, a settled lordship.

The second thing, **a solid logic**. Alright now look at it. Look if you will now at 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 a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

Now the pagans have some good questions, real good questions. But we’ve got better answers. We’ve got good answers. We have solid answers. As a matter of fact the word “answer” here, “to give an answer” is the word we get our word “apologetics” from. You know what apologetics is? In theology, apologetics is a reasonable defense of our faith. To say, “This is what we believe and why we believe it.” And, “You don’t have to check your brains at the door when you become a Christian.” The Bible says in Second Timothy 2 verse 15, “We’re to study to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed.” And many who are Baptist ought to be ashamed of the weakness and shallowness of their faith. They understand so little. You ask the average Baptist, “What do you believe?” and they begin to stutter and stammer. Somebody asked a woman, they said, “What do you believe?” She said, “I believe what my church believes.” “What does your church believe?” “Oh, the church believes what I believe.” “What do you and your church believe?” “Oh, we both believe the same thing.”

Some of you if you were to come up to automobile accident and a man were dying pumping his life’s blood out on the asphalt and he were to say to you, “Are you saved?” You say, “Oh yes, I’m a Christian. Adrian Rogers is my pastor.” “Well, I’m dying. Will you tell me how to be saved, how to get to Heaven.” You say, “Now don’t die yet. I’ll run and get my pastor.” That’s true. I mean, people do not know how to share their faith. They are not ready to give an answer of the hope that is in them.

Now we need to sharpen up on our faith. Our college students need to know before they leave this church what they believe in. Why they believe it. Because their faith is going to be assaulted in these last days and they need a solid logic. *The Washington Post* said this about you. Do you want to know what they said about you? As a Bible believer, as a class of people? They said you’re poor, uneducated and easy to command. That’s what they think about us. Poor, uneducated and easy to command. We need some articulate people who will speak up on the job, speak up in society, speak up in politics, speak up in the city schools, speak up for the Lord Jesus Christ and do it reasonably with a solid logic.



Now that doesn't mean that we are to argue with unreasonable people. As a matter of fact, the Bible warns against that. Let me give you a couple of verses. Proverbs 26 verse 4, "Answer not a fool according to his folly." I have people trying to draw me in all kinds of arguments all the time. But you know, if you wrestle with a pig, you'll get dirty. And the pig doesn't care. When you ask, when you argue with a fool, somebody standing around can't tell who's who. The Bible makes that very clear. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 6, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you." So we're not going to argue with foolish people about our faith.

But friend, we are to share our faith. God gives us wonderful, wonderful answers. And there needs to be a logic in our answers. I mean a sanctified, divine logic. Second Timothy 2 verses 24 and 25, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive." that means, you don't argue with people, you don't debate. "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." God has to give them repentance. You will never argue anybody into the kingdom of Heaven. But you do need to give an answer if you want them to believe, you've got to give them something to believe. Second Timothy 2 verse 25, "That God may grant them repentance that they might come to an acknowledgment of the truth."

Somebody wrote a letter to our paper about me. A letter to the editor said this, listen to it. "Rogers claims, as other Christians have, that while they worship an all-powerful, all knowing, all loving God, and that God knew what was going to happen on September the 11<sup>th</sup> 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. 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. So either way, their God is not so all-powerful or all-loving."

Now that argument if you took, college logic, you'll face that argument right away. I mean, I face that, people face that. You know, that argument's been going on for hundreds of years. Now they say, "If God were all good, He would destroy evil. If He were all powerful, He could destroy evil. Evil is not destroyed. So therefore there is no God that is all powerful or all good." That's a faulty syllogism. It doesn't have the logic. Any Christian who knows the Word of God can refute all of that. God could not destroy evil without destroying freedom. A person has to choose to be disloyal in order to be loyal. A person has to choose not to love in order to love. Forced love is a contradiction in terms and not love at all. Well, what is the great commandment? Matthew 22 verses 36 through 37, "'Master, which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said unto him, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.'" That's, that's the big one, to love God. You cannot love God without the freedom to love God, to choose to love God. If God were to destroy evil and force love, forced love is a contradiction in terms and is no love at all. So to destroy evil, so as to take away the opportunity to choose would in itself be an act of evil.

The great question is not "Why doesn't God destroy evil?" The great question is how could God love us so much that He would allow His darling Son to die on a cross to save us from our sins? But I want to tell you that these kind of arguments ought not to stampede us. They ought to cause us to go to the Word and to see from the Word what the Bible teaches.



Now, friend, there is to be a settled lordship in these last days. There is to be a solid logic, get the Word of God. Open up your mind. Study to show yourself approved unto God. And don't say you can't learn. I'm sick and tired of people telling me they can't learn. If you got \$1,000 for every Bible verse you memorized, you'd be a rich man. It's true! It's a matter of motivation, what you want to learn. What you want to know. Most people spend very little time studying the great truths of the Word of God. How do you expect to get it? By osmosis?

Number three, **a superior lifestyle**. Settled lordship, a strong logic, and a superior lifestyle. Notice again in verse 13, "But sanctify the Lord God in your heart and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you of a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." Why would anybody ask you about your faith? There's one reason. Because of your lifestyle, when they see your superior lifestyle. And the Bible says, "The hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

Do you know what meekness is? It is strength under control. The Roman army was called meek. Moses in the Bible was called the meekest man that ever lived. He certainly wasn't weak. Jesus said, "I am meek and lowly." He means strength under control. And fear does not mean cringing dread. It means reverence. When they see us with lives under control in a chaotic age, they know that there is a difference.

Now the sad thing is they don't see many Christians with meekness and reverence. Do you know what they think of us? They think of us as being hate mongers, they think of us as being arrogant. I want to tell you that angry rhetoric is not the answer.

You know when I cringe a little bit? I cringe a little bit when sometimes I'll stand in the pulpit and speak to you about some of the social issues of our day, then I see some of you, bless your sweet hearts, will take pen in hand, dip it in acid and write a letter to the editor that is not productive at all. It's not well thought out. It is not kind. It is arrogant. It is filled with pride. It is filled with superiority and I sometimes think, "Dear God, help our people to be wise in their very answers that they give." You know the Bible says here in James chapter 1 verses 19 and 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."

When Roy Moore had the monument of the Ten Commandments, there was a man, red faced, he said, "Put our God back!" I said, "Oh God, dear God." Yeah, I believe the man's heart was good, but he wasn't helping. Not at all, not at all. How we need to let our speech be always seasoned with salt. A full mind wedded to a loving heart. The logic and the lifestyle have to go together.

Notice First Peter chapter 2, just go back. Look if you will in verses 21 through 23, "For even here unto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." Peter's writing at a time of Roman Emperors when Nero was Emperor. They took Christians, poured oil on them, hot tar on them, nailed them to crosses, set them on fire and used them to light their gardens. That's what was happening to these Christians. But do you know what it was that turned the Roman Empire upside down and caused the Gospel of Jesus Christ to spread?



It was the ability of these Christians to suffer righteously, not timidly, not fearlessly, but righteously as the Lord Jesus Christ gave us an example.

A Chinese student standing up against the oppression of a godless Chinese red government said, "Lies written in ink cannot obscure truth written with blood." We have to have a superior lifestyle. We don't need to be arrogant. Did you know that you can win an argument and lose an audience? God help us to use the logic and the love and turn that into a lifestyle. True humility, true humility will disarm those who oppose us.

And friend, I want to tell you something, we have enough scandals in the church, we have no right to strut anyway. And when we say, "Yes," God have mercy upon us. When we're willing to admit our fault then God will help us.

I want to say a little bit more about a superior lifestyle before I go on. Listen, what I'm calling you to do; we need to out-live, out-give, out-study, out-pray, out-preach, out-sacrifice the pagans. When they look at us, they need to see somebody who is different. A Christian ought to stand out like a Gardenia in a garbage can. When we live that way, people are going to be able to ask us, what makes you tick?

Classic example, Paul and Silas were thrown into prison for preaching the Gospel in Philippi. The Bible tells us that there was an earthquake and the jail doors were shaken loose and the shackles fell from the hands and legs of Paul and Silas and all of the other prisoners there. The keeper of the prison thought that the prisoners had fled and he was about to fall on his sword because he figured I'd rather kill myself than be tortured and be killed for letting these very significant prisoners escape. But Paul and Silas said to this man, "Look, don't hurt yourself. We're all here. We haven't taken advantage and tried to escape. We are here. We recognize governmental authority. And if God doesn't set us free, then here we are. We're all here." But the important thing is this; that this man had heard Paul and Silas at midnight praising God and praying.

Do you know what he did? The Bible says in Acts chapter 16 that he called for a light, came in there looked around and he asked this question, "Can you guys tell me what I've got to do to be saved?" Wouldn't you like somebody to ask you that question? "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Acts 16:30. Now I am absolutely convinced that that man saw in Paul and Silas something that he had never seen before. He saw a different lifestyle, a superior lifestyle.

Now, here's the next thing; **steadfast love**. Alright, now look here if you will in First Peter chapter 4 beginning in verse 8 to verse 9, "And above all things have fervent charity," you, I'm reading King James, you may translate that love on fire, "fervent charity among yourselves: for charity," love, "shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging." That is, in the very church itself. When people think of this church or any church they need to say, "Behold, how they love one another." The love that we have, the steadfast love, stands out like a diamond on the bright velvet of the hostility and debauchery and wickedness and hatred.

Our church, our church needs love. Love not only for one another, but love for the lost. Are we against abortion? Yes, we're against abortion. But we need to show love for those who have participated in abortion. The abortionists and the one who has had an abortion. And what are we





going to do to help young pregnant women who, yes, through their own sin, in most instances, have gotten pregnant and seek an abortion. Do we wrap our robes of self-righteousness about us, look down on them and drive them into the very arms of the abortionist?

We believe in the permanency of marriage. We're not going to lower the standard. God's plan is one man for one woman till death do them part. What about the people who are divorced? Friend, there are millions and millions and millions of people who are divorced. Are we just going to say, "You go to Hell? We are a good church. We don't believe in divorce. You're not welcomed here." They need our love. They need our love. They're bruised and broken and hurt. And we can be like a bunch of self-righteous Pharisees and drive them not only away from our presence and keep them coming from the Lord Jesus Christ.

What about those whose minds are twisted and tortured with the pollution of pornography? Pornography doesn't just lead to degeneracy, it is degeneracy. But they need help and love.

What about those who are in the homosexual lifestyle? Will we say that, "You can't come to our church if you believe homosexuality or you practice homosexuality?" They need Jesus. They need to be saved. They're not going to be saved by our self-righteousness. Oh yes, we're going to preach against abortion. We're going to preach against divorce. We are going to preach against adultery. We're going to preach against homosexuality. But how are we going to reach this world? How are we going to reach our city? The only one way that we're going to do it is to sanctify the Lord in our hearts. To be ready always to give an answer of the hope that is within us. To have a lifestyle that is so different that people will see that lifestyle and say, "What makes you tick?" And all of that. To be soaked and saturated with genuine love, a steadfast love.

Last of all, there needs to be a **satisfied longing**. Now notice what he says, look again in First Peter 3 verse 15, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer that asketh you of a reason of the hope that is in you." Hope is a longing that is satisfied. That's what hope is. Hope means more than certainty. It means something you long for, something you desire. It is faith transformed into reality in your hope, in your heart and in your life. Faith is rooted in reason. It goes beyond reason. It becomes it's own best reason and the Bible calls that hope.

Now we're to have that satisfied longing. If we're going around without hope, without a steadfast hope, then we have failed to show the greatest thing that this world needs. This world is wondering, is there hope? Is there an answer? My brothers and sisters, there is an answer. His name is Jesus. The Bible is true. The Holy Spirit is real. There is an hope in Christ. And we need to demonstrate that. We need to have in our own hearts a satisfied longing that Jesus has met the deepest needs of our heart.

Let me tell you something else. I'm an American, but our job is not to ultimately save America. Although I hope America will persevere for many years. I love freedom. But our job is not primarily to preserve our freedom. Our responsibility is to stand up for Jesus Christ and to witness about His grace and power with unshakeable hope. A satisfied longing, that Jesus had met the deepest needs of our heart.



I want to give you some good news and I'll be finished. God is moving in a mighty way in our world. We may look sometimes at a pagan society and we may say, "Well, it's all over." Friend, these are the greatest days of evangelism in the history of the Christian church.

I want to tell you just a few things. Bill and Vonette Bright got on their knees and gave all that they had to Jesus Christ. Signed a contract on their knees and said, "Lord, we will be your slaves and give You everything that we have." When Bill Bright stepped over into Heaven, Campus Crusade had a staff that had exploded to over 25 thousand on the staff, with more than 553,000 volunteers. The Jesus film alone has helped to start over 750,000 churches; just by a couple that got on their knees and became slaves to the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Newsweek Magazine* reported this of what is happening in Africa. April 16, 2001: "All across the African subcontinent, Christianity is a 24/7 experience; 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," and "God is good." Inside urban malls the lilting pop music carries an upbeat Christian message in Ebo, Kiwi, or Swahili. Even the signs above the store fronts bear public witness. Thy Will Be Done Hair Saloon. The Lord is My Light Car Wash. And Trust In God Auto Repair; Specialists in Mercedes Benz. Here among the Ashanti and Beganda, and a thousand other tribes occupying the world's second largest continent," listen to this now, don't miss this, "Christianity is spreading faster than at any time or place in the last 2,000 years." Think of that. Think of what's happened through Campus Crusade.

Dr. James D. Kennedy, who is the progenitor of Evangelism Explosion, said, and I quote, "We are in the midst of the greatest in-gathering 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. He said, "In the year 100 A.D. there was estimated about 100 converts a day. By the year 1900 it had risen to 943 converts a day in the world. By 1950, there were 4,500 a day. By 1980, 20,000 a day. By 1995, 100,000 souls a day coming to Christ. Today, 200,000 souls a day and growing, coming to Jesus Christ." The greatest days of evangelism are right now. Happening today.

Dr. Tim LaHaye, who's spoken from this pulpit, and has been the author of the *Left Behind* series gave a report to *Time Magazine*. And he said that, "The revival going on in China may be the greatest revival in the history of the world." Going on right now in China. "We as Southern Baptists are seeing an astounding rate of growth in our mission efforts around the world. Annual baptisms went from 262,758 in 1993 to 451,301 in 2000. From 262,000 to 451,000. A 172% increase. New churches went from 2,019 in 1993 to 6,526 in 2000. A 323% increase. Total churches overseas almost doubled.

We're receiving reports of many Arabs and Muslims are coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Many of them are seeing visions. Strange things are happening. And they are hearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. And God in His infinite mercy seems to be stepping behind the lines and revealing Himself to these people.

Chuck Colson spoke and said, "Don't tell me that God can't make a change in a pagan culture."

Now folks, I don't know what that does to you, but it just tells me that we'd better not say it's too late for God. These are great days. And what we need is a lifestyle for the last days. We need to settle



it once and for all, now and forever that Jesus Christ is Lord. We need to understand what we believe and why we believe it. We as God's people need to begin to live like God's people and live a superior lifestyle so that people can see a difference in us, what makes us tick. And we need to show love, genuine love, Christ like love, so people can come to our church and say they'll be welcomed. They'll be received. No matter if they look different from us. I don't mean that we're going to overlook their sin. I don't mean we're going to compromise. But friend, we're going to love them to Jesus Christ. And friend, we need to do it all with a hope, a settled hope in our heart.

A satisfied longing that Jesus has met the deepest needs of our life. Because folks, I don't know how much longer we have. I don't know what's going to happen folks? But I know who's in control. And I know that God has called us. God has anointed us. God has equipped us to do what we ought to do. And God's people said? We will. We will.

Father God, help us to live with a lifestyle in these last days that You can be pleased with. Now while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you're here today, tonight, and you're not absolutely certain that you're saved. You know God wants to save you and God will save you. And you don't have to beg Him to save you. He longs to save you. He promised to save you. He will save you if you will trust Him.

Would you pray a prayer like this, "Dear God, I need You so much. I need You God. I want You. I'm sick and tired of this old life. I want a new life. I want a purpose for living and a hope in dying. I want to know you personally God. Lord Jesus, I believe You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. Thank You for that. Thank You Jesus. Now I receive it by faith into my heart. Come into my life now, right now. Now come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me Lord Jesus. Take control of my life from this moment on and begin to make me the person you want me to be. Thank You for doing it. In Your name I pray, Amen."

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