

Submission: A Path To Blessing

1 Peter 3:8-12

Pastor John Miller

I want you to follow with me. I'm going to read this entire section, verses 8 to 12, that we're going to unpack for you this morning. Peter says, "Finally, be all of one mind, having compassion one of another..."—he says—"...love as brethren, be pitiful, and be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, knowing that you are thereunto called, that you should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him hate evil. Let him do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers. But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

I want you to notice that in closing this section on submission, Peter opens verse 8 with the word "finally." Now he says that not because he's concluding his epistle—he goes on for two more chapters—but he's saying that in the sense that we would say "for the rest," or "in summary" would be a better phrase. In summarizing what? He's summarizing the teaching on submission. I want to point this out. Go back with me to chapter 2, verse 12. Peter says, "Having your manner of living 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." And that verse, a free paraphrase would be, Peter is saying, "Live a good and godly life..."—live a beautiful life. The word "honest" there means "beautiful" life. "Live a lovely life so that others will see your good works, and they'll come to Christ and they'll glorify God on that day." Now that good or lovely life is a life of submission. And we've been looking at it for the last four weeks.

We first saw that we're to be submitted to the state or the government; chapter 2, verse 13. Second, we're to be submitted in the workplace. It says that we're to obey our "masters," or in our case, our employers. And then thirdly, we are to be submitted in the home. And we looked at that the last two Sundays. Chapter 3, verse 1, "Likewise, you wives, be subject to your own husbands." And then chapter 3, verse 7, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them..."—your wives—"...according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." Now I went into a lot of background; some of you weren't here for those messages. But the subject is submission.

Now submission is not a popular subject today. Today we're hearing, "Do what you want. Live how you please. Do what's best for you. Don't think about others. Think about yourself. Love yourself. Believe in yourself, and live for yourself." That's the message that is popular in our culture today. But Jesus said, "If you want to find your life, you need to lose it for My sake and the Gospel." Jesus said, "If you seek to find your life, you're going to lose it." So the way to really have life, and have a blessed life, is to die to yourself, to live for God and to consider others to be more important than yourself.

Jump down to verse 10 of chapter 3 before we start in verse 8 for just a moment. Verse 10 of

chapter 3. “He that will love life and see good days.” That’s what he’s saying in our text. You want to love life? You want to have a lovely life? You want to enjoy life? You want to see good days? Then he’s going to give us the ingredients necessary for a blessed, wonderful and happy life. I’m going to tell you today how to be happy. I’m going to tell you today how to be blessed. I’m not going to tell you how to be rich. I’m not going to tell you how to be famous. I’m not going to tell you how to be healthy. I’m not going to tell you how life will be perfectly smooth for you. There’s going to be bumps and difficulties in the road. But I’m going to tell you, based on this text, how you can have a blessed life. How God can bless your life, and you can have a good and a wonderful life.

It basically involves three things. I want you to notice it in the text. We have to cultivate three things. If you’re taking notes, write them down. First of all, we cultivate right attitudes. Did you know outlook is determined by attitudes? So we need to have right attitudes, and the overarching attitude is that of submission. Submission. But I want you to notice it in verse 8. He says, “Finally...”—or in summary—“...be ye all...”—now the “all” there is a reference to the Christians. And he’s speaking about Christians relating to other Christians in the church, the body of Christ. He says, “You are to be of one mind, you are to have compassion one of another, you’re to love as brothers, you’re to be pitiful...”—in my King James translation—“...and you are to be courteous.”

Now Peter gives us five attitudes that every Christian should cultivate if they’re going to have a blessed and wonderful and happy life. Again, if you’re taking notes, write them down. First, we’re to be like-minded. Notice it in verse 8. “Be ye all of one mind.” Now is Peter saying here that we must agree with everything with everyone? Is Peter saying we should view everything the same, that we all think the same, that we all have the same ideas? Someone said, “If two people are agreeing on everything, one of them is not thinking.” It’s impossible. Even husbands and wives disagree. “Oh, really?”

And in the church, the body of Christ, there’ll be times when we don’t agree on certain things. Now there are non-essentials that it’s okay to disagree over. We have non-essentials like what style of music in the church, or should we have chairs or pews, or should the church have stained glass or not, or shall we sing hymns or contemporary worship choruses, or can Christians dance, or can Christians go to the theater, or can Christians play cards or is it okay to wear makeup. You know, all the questions that Christians will fight over. People ask me, “Pastor Miller, can Christians dance?” I say, “Some can, and some can’t.” This Christian can’t. And this Christian won’t. Not because it’s wrong or it’s unbiblical, but because I look like a dork is what it is. You know, I’m not going to do that. But let’s not fight over things that are not prohibited in the Scriptures. Let’s get along.

But there are things like the nature of God, that God is triune—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It’s called the Trinity. We have to believe that to be a Christian. And we believe in the deity of Christ; that He’s the God-Man Who died on the cross for our sins. We all believe as Christians that Jesus died in our place on the cross. As a Christian, you have to believe in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. That’s part of orthodox Christian doctrine. So there

are essentials that we all must hold to and we must agree on. But Peter's not saying that we all have exactly the same agreement with these non-kind-of-important issues.

What is Peter saying here? Peter is saying that we have not a uniformity of opinion but what I call a unity of disposition. Not a uniformity of opinion but a unity of disposition. You know, there is a difference between uniformity and unity. What is the difference? Uniformity comes from pressure on the outside. And you know that when you are in a church and everybody looks exactly the same. Everybody dresses the same, looks the same, acts the same, and some churches say you have to have a certain kind of Bible and you have to dress a certain way. That's pressure on the outside. That's what I call legalism. It's to create uniformity.

But the unity is of the Spirit. It's a disposition of the heart. Where we love one another, and we pray for one another and we forgive one another. And we serve together for one purpose of heart, and that is the glory of God; amen? That's what we're in this for. We're in that God be glorified and that we love one another, forgive one another, work together.

So he says the first ingredient to the right attitude of having a blessed and happy life is that we be like-minded. You know, within the church, there is both diversity as well as unity. And I would liken the human body as a great illustration. You know, my body has many members. I have two hands. I have fingers. I have toes. I have ears. I have eyes. I have a nose. And I have arms. And I have legs. But I'm one body. But many members. So in the church, we are many members, but we make up that one church, that one body. And there is only one true church. That's the church of Jesus Christ. We're all believers. We've been born again and are part of the family of God, no matter what denomination or what local church we are part of. So we are to be like-minded. We're to have a disposition of humility.

I think another great illustration of this attribute is found in the Lord Jesus Christ, described in Philippians, chapter 2. Don't turn there; I'll just read it to you. Paul says beginning in verse 2, "Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, that you have the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but with humility of mind let each esteem others more important than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things..."—or interests—"...of others. Let the same mind, which was in Christ, be in you; Who, being in the form of God, thought equality with God not something to hold to, but made Himself of no reputation..."—or literally, humbled Himself—"...took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in a fashion as a man, He humbled Himself..."—notice that—"...and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Now I know I read a lot of verses there from Philippians 2, but Paul basically said Jesus was in heaven. He was equal with God, the Father. He thought that equality was not something to hold on to, but He emptied Himself—not of His deity. That's an impossibility—but of His glory and of His majesty and of the splendor of His divine essence. And He came down to earth through the womb of the Virgin Mary, and He took on humanity. So He became the God-Man. Not only did God become a man, but as a man, He humbled Himself and became a servant.

He washed feet. He loved people. He cared for others. And then ultimately He gave His life a sacrifice on the cross for the sins of the world.

Now Peter is saying the same thing. When he says, "Be like-minded," he's saying, like Paul, "Let the same mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." What's that mind? It's an attitude of humility. The word "mind" there means your attitude. You know, if you want to be blessed, you have to become a humble servant to others. And the first step is a like-mindedness, that we want God's will in our lives. We want God to be glorified; that your interests are more important than my own. It's the mind of Christ.

Notice the second way that we cultivate right attitudes is that we are sympathetic, in verse 8. There are five characteristics of this attitude in verse 8. The second one is sympathetic. In the King James version it says, "Having compassion one of another." So he first says that we are to be of one mind, then, secondly, he says we are to have compassion. Now that word "compassion," we get our word "sympathy" from. It means to be sympathetic. The word "sympathy" means to feel with. I love the definition of sympathy being your pain in my heart. That's sympathy. Your pain in my heart. Do you ever ask God to give you a sympathetic heart? You go, "No, I don't want to deal with that." Do you ever ask God to be feeling what other people feel? To care for them by a sympathetic heart of understanding? William Barclay said, "As long as self is the most important thing in the world, there can be no sympathy. Sympathy depends on the willingness to forget self, to step outside self and to identify oneself with the pains and sorrows of others. It is only when we die to self that we can live to others. Sympathy comes to the heart when Christ reigns within." How important that is. When Christ comes to reign in my heart, and Christ is reigning in your heart, we're of one mind and we're sympathetic one with another. In Romans 12:15, Paul said, "Rejoice with those that do rejoice, and weep with those that weep." By the way, every one of these attitudes was found in Jesus Christ. He was sympathetic. He was weeping with others who were weeping.

Here's the third attitude we need to cultivate. And that is loving the brethren. He says we need to "love as brethren." We get our word "Philadelphia" from that. It's the Greek word "phileo." And it means to love as brothers. Now I didn't grow up with any brothers. I grew up with all sisters. I had two older and two younger. What a joy. No; I love my sisters. I wouldn't trade them for the world. They've been a blessing. But I always wanted a brother, you know. It's like someone I can wrestle with and box with, you know. My sisters used to get me to play dolls with them. Nah. They'd dress me up and push me around the block and stuff like that. That's why I'm kind of tweaked today; I'm kind of messed up. My sisters messed me up. And then I get married and we have children. And the children—the first three are girls. I'm like, "God!" I'm destined to live in a household of women my whole life. And then the Lord gave us our fourth child, a son. So what a blessing. We did box. My son and I used to box in the living room together.

But I remember going over to friends who had brothers. I thought that was so cool. But they would fight like cats and dogs. I mean, they didn't even put gloves on. They just fisticuffs, man. They went at it. I had one friend who threw a hammer at his brother, you know. He would have

killed him. "Aah, I'm going to kill you! Aah!" So when you're reading the Bible, "love your brother," some of you are going to say, "Not good. My brother and I just used to go to blows, you know." That just isn't good. But the word "Philadelphia," love his brother, means to see that we're part of the same family, to have that phileo kind of love, one for another. Where all the children of God with God as our Father.

And then, fourthly, we're to develop an attitude of compassion. Now I chuckle a bit because my King James version has, "Be pitiful." I remember when I first read that I thought, "Oh, Christians are to be pitiful." And a lot of Christians look pitiful. But it literally means "have pity" or have compassion. Now someone said in a little poem, "Pity weeps and walks away. Compassion comes to help and stay." There's a difference between pity and compassion. Pity just goes, "Aw, I'm sorry. See you later." And you walk away. Compassion rolls up its sleeves and gets down on its knees and helps. So we just don't want to have pity; we want to have compassion. Jesus, the Bible says, "was moved with compassion." So if you're a compassionate person, it's going to move you to help others. That's what this concept is saying.

And by the way, compassion is a Christian virtue. You study the world prior to Christ and Christianity, it was a very uncompassionate, cruel, dark world. It's only in those places in the world, even today, where Christianity has had an influence, that you find compassion. I believe the reason why America is such a compassionate nation is because we were founded by Christians upon Christian principles. And the farther we get away from Christ, the less compassionate as a nation we become. God wants us to have an attitude of compassion.

And then the fifth, and last, attitude we need to develop in order to be blessed and happy is that we need to be humble. Now, again, my King James translation has "courteous," but the idea is that we are to be humble. It doesn't just mean we are to open the door for people, say "please" and "thank you," which is good. When I hear the words "be courteous," I hear my mom saying "What do you say? 'Please' and 'thank you.'" That's not what it's talking about. It's talking about an attitude of humility. And, again, Jesus Christ is an example of this virtue. Jesus said, "I am meek and I am humble of heart"; right? Even though He was God, even though the Father had put all power and authority in His hands, Jesus humbled Himself and became a servant to others. So a humble person is a submissive person. The Bible says, "God gives grace to the humble, but the proud He knows far off."

Now the way to be humble, by the way, practically, is to look long and hard at Jesus Christ. The more we look at Jesus, the more we see Him, the more humble we become. We realize, "I don't deserve His blessings." You know that none of us this morning deserve anything from God. Everything we have is from God. We have nothing in our natural state to be proud of. All things, life and breath, come from God. When I laid down to sleep last night, through the night, it was God Who kept me breathing on my bed. When I woke up and ate my breakfast, it was God Who provided that food. When I drove my car to church this morning, it was God, the One Who provided that. God gives me health. When I stand before this congregation and I preach the Word of God, it is God Who gives me the strength and God Who gives me the ability to preach His Word. We have nothing to glory in. We have nothing to boast in. "To God be the

glory. Great things He hath done.” And the sooner we turn away from self and we look at the Savior and we realize that God is the one Who gives all things, it’ll humble us. So the first step: develop a right attitude. Be like-minded one with another in the church. Be sympathetic. Love as brothers. Be compassionate and be humble. Cultivate these attitudes.

Here’s the second main point and step we need to take to a blessed and wonderful, happy life. And that’s we need to cultivate a right response to mistreatment. You know, when you go through life, people will mistreat you; right? People will yell at you. They’ll call you names. They will lie about you. They will attack you. So we need to know how to respond to ill treatment. Notice it in verse 9. He says, “Not rendering evil for evil...”—that’s what we want to do in the natural—“...or railing for railing...”—someone yells at you, we want to yell back—“... but the contrary, blessing; knowing that you are thereunto called, in order that you might inherit a blessing.” If you want God to bless your life, when someone yells at you, you don’t yell back.

And by the way, we just finished marriage—wives and husbands. Isn’t it interesting that he says these things right after the marriage passage? What a great passage. Be kind, tenderhearted, loving one another, be sympathetic, be humble. And then he says, “Don’t render evil for evil.” When someone yells at me I want to yell back. When someone honks their horn—one of my pet peeves—I lose my sanctification. Now if I’m gonna kill you, I’m gonna run into you, and there’s going to be loss of life or property, then go “Beep!” But when I’m stopped at a red light, the minute it turns green, you don’t have to go “Hooooonk!” My flesh wants to put it in park, get out of the car, go back and say, “Something wrong with your horn?” I’m just convinced that if I did that you’d be from Revival Christian Fellowship. “Pastor John!” And we’d both be in big trouble. You know, the natural response is, someone hits me, I’m gonna hit him back. In the Old Testament, “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” I kind of like three teeth for one tooth. I like the precatory psalms. “Lord, break their teeth in their mouth.” I love that. That’s my life verse. I’ve underlined it in my Bible. “Praise God!”

Now Jesus said this in Matthew. He said, “Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you. Bless those who spitefully use you...”—Because if you do that, you’re in good company —“...for so persecuted they, the prophets, which were before you.” When Jesus hung on the cross, He said, “Father, forgive them; they don’t know what they’re doing.” And we’re to have the same heart, the same attitude, the same mind that Jesus had. So cultivate a right response. In verse 9, “Don’t render evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing.”

Peter learned this lesson well. Remember when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and they came to arrest Jesus? What did he do? He pulled out his sword. And he was going to take out one of the servants of the priests—he was going to take off his head. Good thing he was a fisherman and not a swordsman; his head would have been rolling in the dirt. Instead he only got his ear. He cut his ear off. And what did Jesus say? He said, “Peter, put away your sword. Those who live by the sword will die by the sword.” How different Christianity is from a lot of the world’s religions today, which try to promote their views by the sword. Jesus said, “Love your enemies. Pray for those which persecute you.” What an awesome attitude Jesus had. So Christians are to love their enemies. Verse 9, it’s your calling, and it’s the way to truly

be blessed.

Here's number three, and my last point. Verses 10 to 12. Cultivate a desire to be blessed of God. Or cultivate a desire for the blessed life. Notice in verse 10. He says, "For he that will love life..." That idea of "love life" means that you will just have a blessed life. You'll enjoy life. You'll actually say, "I'm just loving life." And he wants to "...see good days..."—he wants God's blessing on their life—"...let him refrain his tongue from evil, his lips that they speak no guile, let him hate evil..."—verse 11—"...let him do good, let him seek peace, and let him pursue it."

So if you want to have a blessed life—you know, a lot of people just want to escape life. Maybe you're here this morning and you're not enjoying life and you want to escape it, so you take up alcohol, and you try to escape life by numbing your senses with alcohol. Or maybe drugs. Or maybe sexual immorality. Or maybe materialism. Or other forms of sinful pleasures. Maybe you're just so discouraged you want to take your life. There's little doubt in my mind that in a congregation this size that someone's here this morning who is contemplating suicide. "I don't even want to live. Life isn't worth living. Why am I even here? I'm miserable."

To begin with, may I be very frank and honest with you? Only God can give you purpose. Only God can give you real meaning. And until God reigns on the throne of your heart, life will not be worth living. Until you're ready to die, you're not ready to live. And life isn't all about you. It's not about your happiness. It's not about your pleasures. It's not about going the way you want to go. It's about God and others. Someone said, "If you want joy, you put Jesus first, others second and you last." That's a prescription for joy. Amen? And it very well could be right now that you're trying to escape life simply because you're living for yourself. And I believe if you die to yourself today and you come to Jesus Christ and you trust Him as your Savior that you'll find life.

Some people just want to endure life. You meet them, "Hey, how ya doin'?" "Oookay. I'm hangin' in there." That's one of our favorite phrases; right? "Hangin' in there." And then you see them a month later. "Hey, good to see you. How ya doin'?" "Oookay." It's the eeyore syndrome. "Oookay." It's okay to be bummed out for a week or two, but I mean, month after month? You see them three years later. "Hey, good to see you. How ya doin'?" "Oookay." And then you don't want to see them anymore. Then you pray, "Lord, I just pray I won't see them anymore." You're not really enjoying life.

And I believe as Christians we can enjoy all of life. The greatest joys of life are the fruits of sorrow. We go through life trying to avoid sorrow. We go through life trying to avoid heartache and pain. We do everything we can to avoid those things. The greatest joys of life are the fruits of sorrow. And I believe God can change your heart to where you just enjoy all of life; every stage of life, every experience of life. Because you know you're a child of God, and "nothing can separate you from the love of God." You know that you have the hope of heaven in your heart through Jesus Christ, and it changes your whole outlook on life. You're not just trying to escape or just endure, but now you're enjoying life.

Now I want you to notice in this passage, verses 10 and 11, that Peter gives us three things that we need to do to have this blessed life. First is control your tongue, second one is turn away from sin and the third is, do good and seek peace. Notice in verse 10, he tells us there that we are to “refrain our tongues from evil and our lips, that they speak no guile.” So we’re to control our tongue. Don’t raise your hand, but have you ever had your tongue get you in trouble? Oh, yes. I had my tongue get me in trouble last service. I said something that I kinda like shouldn’t have said. Not bad, but should have said it a little differently. The Bible says, “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin.” The more you talk, the more likely your tongue’s going to get you into trouble. How many times have we all said, “Aw, I wish I wouldn’t have said that. Why did I say that?! Oh, man! Did I have to open my mouth?” The most ferocious beast on planet earth makes its den behind the human teeth. It’s called the tongue. The Bible says, “The tongue can no man tame.”

But I believe that if we yield to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit takes control of our heart, and then He takes control of our tongue. You know, what comes out of your mouth comes from your heart. Did you know that? That’s what the Bible says. It says, “From the abundance of the heart, the...”—what?—“...mouth speaks.” People say, “Whoops. I don’t know where that came from.” It came from your heart. If it’s in the well, it comes up in the bucket. Duh. So when your heart is changed, then your vocabulary changes. Words of kindness, words of love, words of encouragement come out of your mouth. So control your tongue.

And then, secondly, turn away from sin. It literally says in verse 11, “Turn away from evil.” The word means to swerve to avoid evil. We must hate sin and we must avoid it. So guard your speech and guard the way you live.

And then the third step is in verse 11. “Then do good...”—that’s the positive—“...and seek peace.” So guard your tongue, turn away from evil, seek to do good and bring peace. Jesus said in Matthew 5:9, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” Not peace breakers, but the peacemakers.

Now you’re saying to me at this point—We’ve almost wrapped up this study. You’re saying, “But Pastor John, if I do that, I’ll get walked on. If I live like that in my marriage, my husband will walk all over me. If I treat my wife like this, she’ll take advantage of me. If I go to the job and I live like this, they’re going to push me around. You gotta assert yourself. You gotta demand your rights.” We hear so much today about our rights, and almost nothing about our responsibilities. Yah, we have rights, but we also have great responsibilities. And one of those responsibilities is to “love my neighbor as myself.” To “love God with all my heart, my soul, my strength, my mind and to love my neighbor as myself.”

Now I want to give you in closing from this very passage three reasons or motives for living a life of love and submission toward others. Toward God and toward others. They’re right here in the text. Three reasons to put this into practice. Reason number one, is “the eyes of the Lord,” verse 12. “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous.” What does that mean? It means His watchful care.

Now I don't know about you, but I want God watching over me. Amen? I want God taking care of me. I want God to keep an eye on me. I need His providential care. And I look at my own life, and I'm just amazed at how good God has been to me. And I know you could say the same thing. "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life..."—all this and heaven too—"...and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." God has been so good to me. I grew up in a Christian home. Married a lovely Christian woman. Have four amazing kids. I have three amazing sons-in-law. I have three wonderful grandchildren. I have a church to serve. God has been so good to me. And I want God's continued blessing on my life. So I want to cultivate right attitudes and right responses. And I want to seek and hunger for God's blessing to continue in my life. So I want to do good, lastly. Notice number three. I want to "do good and seek peace."

But notice that we have "the eyes of the Lord," and then secondly, "the ears of the Lord." Jump back down to verse 12. He said, "His ears are open to their prayers." So I've underlined "eyes of the Lord" and then I've underlined "ears open to prayers." So we have the Lord's eyes and His ears. What does that mean? It means that God will answer your prayers. You know, that God's not obligated to answer your prayers if you're not walking in obedience to Him. If you're not walking in humility and caring for others. If you're not having compassion and sympathy and humility in your life. If you do those things, then God will watch over you, and God's ears will be bent toward you. I want to be able to pray and know that God hears and answers my prayers.

And then the third motive is the face of the Lord, in verse 12. He said, "But the face of the Lord is against them that do..."—what?—"...evil." Now what I haven't mentioned here is that beginning there in verse 10 all the way down to verse 12, that Paul is quoting from Psalm 34:12-16. Verbatim, word for word. Some feel that he is actually quoting from what is known as the "Septuagint," which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It was made during the Inter-Testament period. But when you read that Psalm, he's quoting it verbatim. And the idea is that he's telling us if we live Biblically, if we live scripturally, if we live according to God's Word, that God's going to bless us. That His eye will watch over us. That His ear will hear us. And His face will not be against us.

But when he comes to the end in verse 12, he omits a portion of that psalm. Psalm 34:16. And this is the part that Peter omitted. "To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." So the psalm actually reads, "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off them and their remembrance from the earth." Peter omits that from this passage we're studying. Why? Because we live in the dispensation of the age of grace. And there is mercy for those who will come to God and call out to God. There is grace for those who will turn to God. But if you harden your heart and resist God and you refuse to submit to the Lord and follow Jesus Christ, then the Bible says, "The face of the Lord is against you." What does that mean? It means that you will face His judgment. You have His displeasure. You will experience His wrath.

You know, when you die, there's only two places where you can go. When you die, you go to heaven or you go to hell. Just to say the word "hell" freaks people out today. You know who

talked more about hell than anyone else? Jesus did. Jesus did. It's a real place. And He doesn't want you to go there. That's why He came from heaven to earth and died on a cross so you can go from earth to heaven. Amen? That's the Good News. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will never perish but have..."—what?—"...everlasting life."

And guess what everlasting life is. It's not just quantity, it's quality. Amen? And the moment you believe or trust in or put your faith in Jesus Christ, you are given eternal life. And at the moment you're saved, you enter into the life of God. A Christian is a person who has the life of God in their soul. It's not going to church. It's not a religion. It's not a rite. It's not a ritual. It's not a race. It's not a creed. It's a relationship.

And if you'll walk in submission and love and obedience to God, you'll have a blessed life. You'll have a happy life. You'll have eternal life. But if you harden your heart and resist Him and you run from Him, the face of the Lord will be against you. And one day you will stand in judgment. And you will be separated from Him for all eternity. The Bible says, "If today you hear His voice, don't harden your heart." The Bible says that if you open your heart, Jesus will come in and forgive you and give you eternal life. He'll give you the hope of heaven. But you must open that door and invite Christ to come in. "All of us have sinned. All of us have fallen short of the glory of God." The Bible says there's "no one righteous; no, not one. But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ." God wants to give you a free gift today. But you must receive it by faith.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.