

Do You View Holiness Like a Pharisee?

Kevin Williams | 2016 Fellowship Conference

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Good morning. If we open our Bibles to Romans 9 and verse 1. When I go to preach in different places, I often ask our church back home, in Manchester, and those in Switzerland, what is the most useful and helpful thing, from me, that you've heard in the last year that you think would be beneficial to others.

What I want to share with you now, the brethren found very helpful both in their own life and in reaching lost family members, friends, neighbors. You see sometimes, otherwise godly Christians, in a kind of over zealousness, can build up an unnecessary wall with lost family members and friends. And so if you know people where there is this wall then, what I'm trying to do with this message this morning is show you how to take it down and reach those people.

We found this in our church, you know, back in Manchester people tend to think of our church, those who don't know us, tend to think of our church as just a church with a great street ministry, reaching people through street evangelism. And we do that, but also the brethren reach people in normal everyday life. And as they've took these bricks out of the wall, what was once a tense relationship, next minute you find someone's lost mother coming to the church meetings. Sometimes even getting saved.

I've entitled this mornings sermon, "Do You View Holiness Like a Pharisee?" When I'm around unbelievers, I always ask this question, What kind of impression am I giving them of Christianity? One of Jesus or one of a pharisee? What are they taking home?

So if we all stand as we read God's Word. I'll read Romans 9 verses 1 to part of verse 4, "I tell the truth in Christ - I am not lying; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit - that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh who are Israelites." I am going to stop reading there. So let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we ask that You would make these truths real to us now. You would search our hearts and You would greatly help us in our own lives, enjoying You. And when we are around lost people, to help us to draw them; not to repel them but to draw them to You. I pray You would greatly encourage and lift up the saints through this word now. By Your Holy Spirit, we ask in Jesus' name, amen. You may be seated.

Okay, let me ask you: In speaking of his great burden for the unsaved Jews here, why does Paul begin by saying, "I am not lying about this." I mean, Paul is a trustworthy guy, is he not? He is a man of his word. So why does he feel the need to begin by stressing to these Christians in Rome here, that he is telling the truth about this. He even then gives an oath in Christ's name, and he says, "I am not lying about this." Well, obviously Paul had anticipated that there would be some of these believers in Rome that think he was lying about what he was about to say. Why would they think that, since Paul was such an honest man of his word after conversion? Well, if we consider what he says here, he says in verse 2, "that he has great sorrow and continual grief in his heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to

the flesh.”

Now, let me make it clear here. Paul does not say that “I wish to be cut off from Christ if it means that these people would be saved,” because no believer could ever wish to be cut off from Jesus Christ. He does not say, “I wish.” That’s not possible. But he says, “I could wish.” Basically, this is a hyperbole figure of speech here, that is, when someone goes to an extreme in order to make a point. It’s like when we say, “I am starving” or, “I am freezing.” Well, not literally.

Paul’s point here with this figure of speech is that he has an overwhelming, intense burden for his fellow countrymen (the Jews) to be saved. So, what’s wrong with that? I mean, don’t we normally want the people we know, and are affiliated with, to be saved? So why does Paul suspect that some in this church in Rome won’t believe him about this? Well, think about this: The Jews were the one people group that Paul should have, by all human reason, come to hate and have a grudge against. I mean, when you consider the way they treated the apostle Paul -- the Jews stoned him, they whipped him, at one time they even took an oath, some of them, that they would not eat again until they had killed the apostle Paul. You can imagine being best friends with people like that. And so, after all the continuous wickedness and the way they treated Paul, one would expect him to, perhaps, have a grievance towards them or even hate them. But instead, we see here that Paul has an overwhelming love and compassion for them. “I have great sorrow,” he says, “and continual grief in my heart that they are not saved.”

Now, the next thing I want you to consider though about this is that Paul’s burden here is for his own countrymen according to his flesh. His burden, you see, was for those who, before his conversion, he had close affiliation with. Those of his own nation, those of his own family, his own bloodline relatives and so forth. You see, there are some people today who take this passage to mean “Well, Paul had a special burden for the Jews here, and so if we too are spiritual then we too will have this special intense burden for the Jews.” Now, of course, listen, there’s nothing wrong with wanting Jews to be saved. I should hope you want people of every nation to be saved. But that’s not how this passage applies to you and me; unless you were born in the land of Israel. You see, the way this applies to us, if we really understand it and take this to heart, is that in the previous chapter, Paul had set forth the doctrines of election and salvation further back there. And so, if we really understand those, then the way this applies to us is that the more we understand those doctrines, then the more we will have an intense burden for our own countrymen - those who were closely affiliated to us before salvation, according to the flesh. That is, our physical family members, the people we knew and grew up with, the people in our own nation, and so forth.

You know, I once heard Paul Washer say that a man told him that he felt called to be a missionary in China. And when Paul Washer asked this man why, he replied, “Because I love Chinese people.” And brother Paul said to him, “The reason you love Chinese people is because you don’t know any.” Now, he wasn’t putting down Chinese people there. But the point he was making was it’s very easy to sit in an ivory tower and say you love people. It’s very easy for people to say, “I love Jews,” or “I love these other far away people,” when at the same time, they have very little or no burden for people of their own country and city, or even their own family members, or the people in their life to be saved. But surely, brethren, it’s a natural thing, is it not? That when you come to Christ for salvation, you want your loved ones (those who are closest to you beforehand) to be

saved. We see this in the New Testament when the disciple Andrew first came to know the Lord, the first thing he did was go and tell his brother, Peter, about Jesus.

Let me put this another way. It is a very unnatural and strange thing to quickly cut all those people off and build walls between them, like many Christians do. They may build a wall, but hopefully it's over some major offence for Christ's sake and not us being pharisees. And so, if we want to learn how to be patient with others and love them, if we are going to learn to be patient like Paul here, he wasn't quick to put people off and build walls up. We must ask and learn from Paul here. What enabled him to have this intense compassion for his fellow countrymen even after they treated him so badly? Why does he not have even the tiniest trace of contempt for them? This is what I want us to ask. We want to learn from this because let's face it, the people who we tend to build walls with don't treat us anywhere near as bad as they treated Paul. And yet, he is still persevering and longsuffering there.

So what enabled him to be like this? Well, let me give you two reasons. One, he was well aware of where these people were heading. He knew that without Christ, they were in a position of everlasting condemnation. But let me give you another reason that enabled Paul to be patient with these people and persevere with them after they treated him so badly, and not hold them in contempt. I think this one is clear throughout the life of Paul in Scripture. And that is, Paul constantly put himself in their shoes. You see, they may have mistreated him. They may have done him great wrong. But Paul knew, just like John Bradford, "But for the grace of God, there go I." Think about this, brethren. Paul had been explaining those truths of election and predestination in the previous chapter. And Paul's understanding of those truths of God electing us (I mean, one thing it makes you realize is that anything good in us, or anything good in Paul here, was only by the grace of God.) And if it wasn't for God's grace, then he could have been worse than those who were mistreating him, and he was doing the same himself before his conversion.

You see, something else about the apostle Paul, he never forgot who he was, did he? He never forgot where he came from. He never forgot what he was like before he was saved. He said in 1 Timothy that he thanks God for putting him in the ministry, even though he was like this before conversion. He says, "I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, an insolent man (someone who is rude, arrogant, showing lack of respect.) But I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in my unbelief." What's he saying there by "I did it ignorantly in my unbelief"? What he is saying is, I was blind, just like those unbelieving Jews. You see, Paul had been in their position and he never forgot that. And then he speaks there of the undeserved favor of God towards him, and that's where he then says that famous verse, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief."

That verse, you know, is often completely taken out of context today to mean that Paul still thought of himself as the worst sinner. But, in the context there, he is talking about his conduct before conversion. What he is saying there is that because of his former conduct, he considered himself to be the least deserving of salvation, never mind a preacher. And so, when he saw others like that, he thought, "I've been in your shoes. I was once just as bad, if not worse, of an undeserving sinner as you are. And yet, the Lord saved me. And He saved me as a pattern that God would save other sinners just like me."

I remember one Friday night when we used to have a church meeting then. We changed it to Wednes-

day now. But we were driving a couple of people home and we passed, i think, some kind of night club with people outside queuing up to go in. And there was a row of girls there, scantily dressed, waiting to go in. And one guy in the car was like, “Look away. Look away.” And it just came across in contempt. It was like, “Sinners!” But Zoe just said, “Well, I remember what I was like.” You see, she had pity on them but had no contempt whatsoever. You see, that is putting yourself in their shoes. That is true holiness. And when you do that, the contempt disappears.

You know, I remember back in school, we watched a movie once. A true story of a little girl who was deaf, dumb, and blind. She had no senses. And one day, there were some doctors and surgeons trying to perform a life-saving operation on her, but she was fighting them off, getting really aggressive with them because she had no sense that they were trying to help her. But those doctors and surgeons, their response was not to get offended because she was being aggressive. It did not make them hate her, because they knew she was deaf, dumb, and blind. Here’s my point: When a lost person mistreats you, or some other family member does something you don’t like, if we truly understand their condition, then we won’t be so quick to cut them off.

So then, the reason why Paul did not have even a trace of contempt or bitterness towards these people who mistreated him so badly was because he knew where they were heading, and he would put himself in their shoes. And Paul never forgot what he was like before the Lord called him. He knew that if it wasn’t for the grace of God, he would just be a worse sinner than them, which brings me to the title of my sermon, Do you view holiness like a Pharisee? You see, is your view of sanctification or growing in holiness like that of a Pharisee? I mean, think about this, how did the Pharisees view holiness? They basically viewed holiness as cutting everything off; cutting people off. If they were offended by someone, they would cut them right out of their lives and have as little to do with them, or have as little to do with them as possible.

Do you remember what they said of Jesus? “This Man receives sinners and eats with them. We wouldn’t do that,” they said, “because we are too holy. If He was holy like we are, then He would have cut them out.” Do you know if the Pharisees saw a leper, they would cross the street and they would throw stones at them. “Get away from me, sinner.” What I am asking is, in quickly withdrawing from people and cutting them off, are you viewing sanctification like a Pharisee? Because, let’s not forget brethren, despite them thinking of themselves as the holy ones, Jesus had more condemnation for the lost, religious Pharisees than anyone else in the New Testament. You see, I want you to notice here, that Paul, after the way his fellow countrymen treated him, he had every right to be offended. And yet, sometimes we cut people off over something or nothing. But he does not despise them or cut them off. Again, there’s no trace of contempt or scorn.

And so, how does this apply in our lives? Well, what if someone offends you in your workplace or in your lost family, or a neighbor, perhaps, how do you react? What if someone does something you find offensive in your school or your college? What if someone in your family does something you recoil at? What if someone you know, a lost person, posts something vile on Facebook, do you instantly hit the defriend? You see, it is a lot easier to cut people off and to scorn them, than it is to love them and be patient with them and try and win them to Christ. Again, these verses here come straight after the truths Paul has set forth of election and predestination.

I want you to notice this. The result of Paul coming to understand those doctrines does not make him

a cold intellectual towards lost people, does it? You know, like many today who are more interested in winning arguments and being right, than they are about winning souls. I find many Christians who spend more time debating Calvinism with other Christians than they do trying to reach lost souls, and I don't just mean with words, but with their lives. And let me add here, understanding these great truths of election did not make Jesus cold. I mean, He wept over the lost city of Jerusalem there - those who would reject Him. You see, my point is this: If your Calvinism -- if your understanding of those types of doctrines like election and predestination -- if they do not produce in you a burden for the lost, then it is just head knowledge, detached from spiritual life.

In fact, we could say here that you can actually measure how much you truly understand these things by how much it gives you a burden, as we see in Paul here. He understood. Or let me put it another way: You can measure how cold an intellectual you are of these things by how quickly you cut people off. You know, this is something that comes periodically, but normally a brother would come to me every now and again, and he would say something like, "I need to leave my job. I'm really struggling at work because they are playing secular music on the radio. And people are swearing, and someone told a dirty joke." You need to leave your job? I thought, Behold the power of God! I just tell them, Look, we are to be in the world but not of it. The Christian is not to come completely out of the world, we are not to separate ourselves, but we are to be salt and light, and a gospel influence around those people. Be around lost sinners like Jesus did.

That's another thing, you know, perhaps in an overreaction to those professing Christians who try and get around sinners just because they enjoy to sin with them; perhaps in an overreaction to them, a lot of Christians seem to have a false impression today that when Jesus hung around sinners, they all acted like saints and were on their best behavior. And so, the way they think they apply that of Jesus being around sinners, is they think, "I too can be around sinners, but only if they are on their best behavior." You know, "I'll go to a family wedding, but let's leave." Show my disdain at a certain hour. They can't just love them and be happy for their marriage. They have to throw in their disdain at some point and completely ruin the witness.

You see, that sort of thing is not the impression I get of how we are to be salt and light in the New Testament. Read 1st Peter's account there about a believing wife winning her unbelieving husband. Do you think that's only if he's on his best behavior? I mean, think about this, brethren. Jesus would have been a lot more sensitive to their sin and be offended by things than we could ever be. And yet, when I read those Gospels, I don't sense any trace of contempt there. He doesn't quickly cut people off. You see, that is true holiness. But, do you see what's going on there in those types of examples like the Christians who would come to me, struggling at work? And they say, "Oh, but they use bad language and so I have to cut them off. Oh, they play secular music on the radio, or they tell a dirty joke or whatever. So I have to quit my job." Why? Are you tempted by that? Are you tempted to start using dirty jokes and to start using bad language yourself? You see, my point is, these people are not put into temptation there. They are being nothing more than pharisees throwing stones at people who they perceive to be the lepers of their day. "Oh! Sinners. Get away from me!"

Listen, I'm not saying you have to like it. But, put yourself in their shoes. I mean, let me ask you this: We all need the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life, don't we? Well, let me ask you this: How much of the Holy Spirit do you need to live in a monastery? None. How much of the Holy Spirit do you need to live in some kind

of Amish or Mennonite society that's cut away from everyone? None. How much of the Holy Spirit do you need if you're going to quickly cut people off and build walls between family members and those you closely associate with before conversion? You don't need any of the Holy Spirit if that's what you're going to do. The pharisees and the cults all do that very well without the Holy Spirit.

You know, sometimes I'll hear Christians say things like, they are so scared of visiting lost family members (you know, the lost mum and dad, or something) in case they put something on on TV that I don't like and I might get a glimpse of, and my children might see it. I really doubt your mum and dad are going to put something like a sex scene on in front of your kids when you go over in the day time. You see, that is being a monk. That's being a good Mormon.

My wife pointed out this, you know, you have the Pharisees in the New Testament where they were supposed to look after their older family members. But they were trying to get out of this duty by giving to the Temple instead, saying it is Corban. When people just try and withdraw, saying, "Oh, I'm too holy," are we not doing the same thing? Is that not Corban? Just not trying to properly reach and persevere and be patient with our lost family members, friends, neighbors, those around us; but dress it up as though we are being spiritual.

Again, it's much easier to cut people off than it is to try and win them. But are you not glad that Christ did not just quickly cut us off when we were offensive to Him for so long. You see, He was kind and long suffering towards us. He persevered with us, and He was cut off for us so that we could be reconciled to God. You see, if ever we find ourselves behaving like a Pharisee, and again, I always ask this when I am around people, "What impression am I giving of a Christian?" If ever we fall into this, we need to learn what this means: "That I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Matt 9:13). We can say, "What so and so is doing is so offensive. I'm just going to cut them off." But Christ says, "No, I desire to give mercy to such people, just like I did to you, remember."

Sometimes, I hear Christians quote the book of Job, and say, "I have made a covenant with my eyes." And that's good! - If by that you mean "I love my Lord, and so I don't want to put unnecessary temptation before my eyes that would cause me to sin or stumble." But, you know, (this may not be a problem here,) but sometimes I see Christian men walking down the street, and they'll see some girl in the neighborhood who they disapprove of their dress, or perhaps someone's got too many tattoos or whatever, or like with a girl there. Instead of giving them a warm, friendly greeting and being kind to them - a little kindness goes a long way, overtime, you know, "You're welcome in our church" - but because of a lack of approval over the way they dress, they kind of turn away and show their disgust. Or walk down the street, turning their heads away. What does that say to the world?

You know, if a so called covenant with our eyes ever causes us to be rude and despise people, then it's really more like the covenant, remember, that Jephthah made; who, in the book of Judges, made a covenant with the Lord that he would kill the first person who came out of his house. Because that's what we're doing when we do that kind of thing. Eternally, though. You see, that type of holiness where you just quickly cut people off is very me-centered. It's very selfish. There's not really much thought for the other person's welfare but it's all about me, myself and I. It's not Christian. You might call it Armenian, but it's not Christian. A lot of Armenian holiness teaching is like that, isn't it? Pharisaical.

Let me give you some examples of ways this is manifested. You know, on Halloween for instance, when

kids knock at the door for chocolate or candy, and the professing Christian responds by either turning all the lights off and locking themselves away, “Get away from me sinners,” or, I’ve even seen this, they rebuke some little 5 year old kid at the door, “You know what you’re doing is evil.” Because, of course, when you give him that candy, he’s going to go home and sacrifice his neighbor’s dog [laughs].

You know, at one time, during Halloween we used to give out Gospel tracts and try to share the Gospel with little kids at the door, but it’s kind of pointless, it’s a 5 year old kid at the door. But this year, we used it to try and build relationships and used it as a chance to be warm and friendly. We always make sure we get the best chocolate, you know, we don’t want to be known as the ‘Stingy House’. But, you know, the kids would pop at the door, and I would pretend to be scared and make them laugh and things. But what you’d have though is normally, in England, you’d have the children who knock at your doors with a mask on, age 5 to about 13, and then you’d have a parent at the end of your driveway, chaperoning them, in case, I suppose, you kidnap them into your house. But this year, we stepped it up a gear and we actually were handing out warm wine and hot dogs for the parents on the cold night. And they really appreciated it. And the funny thing was, the only other person that was doing a similar thing in our area was Gayna, a sister in our church around the corner, who was handing out hot chocolates for the parents. You see, what we’re doing there is showing ourselves warm and friendly. A little kindness goes a long way. I mean, we have a great opportunity there, rather than getting uptight over a little thing.

You see, one way the Pharisees viewed holiness (and we can make it look like this,) is making the kingdom of God being like a set of rules - more things that we’re against than what we’re for. Paul said in Romans 14:17 - one of my favorite verses in the Bible since I’ve come to understand it - “For the kingdom of God is not eating or drinking but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” You see, Paul rebukes them there. He says, “You’re making the kingdom of God look like it’s a matter of eating and drinking - all about observing these strict dietary laws, rules and regulations. You’re giving a false impression of what a Christian is.” It’s the kingdom. It’s so much bigger. You know, we don’t want to make too much fuss over all those little things. We had a brother making a massive deal over Christmas. “I can’t celebrate this, and I can’t go to my lost family members’ Christmas.” And I said, if you want to build up a wall between your lost family and cut them off, just make a big deal out of things like Christmas. You know, if you really hate them and want them to go to hell and cut them off, then just make a big deal over things like that. Because that’s what you’re doing. Again, it’s making the kingdom of God look like it’s Pharisaical with a few laws and regulations.

Back in our church, we used to have a Christmas day service but we stopped it this year. We have our carol service before where we invite people to, but Christmas day, we realize, is a time when the Christians can go to be with their lost family members, (because it’s a great offense otherwise to them,) and just be around them.

Another way in which a Christian can be like a pharisee is viewing holiness like this: Becoming unnatural and having no interest in people’s lives around us. I want you to notice in our text, Paul still speaks of his countrymen as MY countrymen. He doesn’t say my former countrymen but now I’m a citizen of Heaven. But they are still his countrymen. Lloyd-Jones said that there are Christians today who think it’s wrong to take an interest in local or national affairs, or even that it’s wrong to vote and things like that. He said that’s just a

bad view of sanctification; that's trying to come totally out of the world. We're supposed to be in the world but not of it, being salt and light there. And I mentioned that because a lot of Christians build up an unnecessary wall with lost people by shunning everything from day to day life, as if I'm too holy for that.

You know, you go to your lost family members, they might be talking about sports or something on the news, and it's just, "Ooooh!" And it just come across as unnatural. There are some Christians who leave a bad impression because they think you have to separate from everything in culture. It's been great going through Genesis back home. We realized there Abraham had a winning party which was some pagan party they did. Just a tradition. Then we realized circumcision didn't start with the Jews. It was really a pagan rite that God took and christianized, because it meant a specific point in a specific culture. So you can do that too. You see, culture is not necessarily evil. We see in the book of Revelation there many tribes and tongues around the throne of God, all with their own cultures, worshiping God.

You know, one of the worst things certain British missionary organizations did at one time was to try and convert the world to 19th century Victorianism and make everyone act and dress like Victorian Englishmen. I mean, convert them to Christ, Yes. But you don't have to make an exuberant African act like a stiff, reserved Englishman. Which leads me to another way one can view holiness like a Pharisee. And that is, having an unscriptural definition between the sacred and the secular. How many people fall into this today? In the Old Testament, all the priests did all the holy work and the secular was separate. But in the New Covenant, you see, it's not like that. In the New Covenant, we are all priests, reigning with God. We are all offering up our priestly service. Now, how are we expected to live this? Are we all expected to become full-time preachers? No, we are to become priests in our daily lives. In your workplace, we are told, do your secular work for the Lord, and you will receive a reward. You know, motherhood, raising the children for the Lord. Whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, do all to the glory of God.

A dear brother, (I almost hate using this example because he's so dear to me, but it really helps so many people,) but he once preached for us and he did very well, except one thing he said and I took issue with. And he said some Christians have a 15-minute devotion time, they have a 15-minute time in the Word, and then he said, "But that's all they give to God. That's all they think God is worth -15 minutes." And I said to him, "Brother, no that is wrong." I said take, for example, the example of a Christian mother. She may have a 15-minute devotion time, but that's not all she gives to God. She then gets the children ready for the Lord. She then runs the house for the Lord. She doesn't just give 15-minutes to the Lord, she gives her whole day to the Lord. And then I added, "Even when she's looking at a friend's baby photos on Facebook." You see what that is, it's this distinction from the sacred and the secular there. We are to be priests. We are not all to be monks and just read the Word all the time, but I'd rather people read less and lived more.

One last thing, and I think this is also very helpful. It certainly helped brethren in our church and me personally in being around unbelievers. And that is, when you become a Christian, you do not cease to be natural. The Christian is natural, but is more than the natural. He's more than the natural but never less. Take, for instance, Paul's burden here. In one sense, it is a natural burden to want to reach those you were closely affiliated with before salvation. Natural. But it's more than the natural after the way they treated him. Jesus told us we're not just to love those who treat us well (our friends, those who love us, our family members) but we

are to love our enemies. But when He said that, He wasn't telling us we're not to love [those who are close to us]. He wasn't telling us we are to be unnatural; we are to be natural but more than the natural.

You see, a lot of Christians spend a lot of time and effort trying to suppress being natural, and act in an unnatural way. And it repels people. It gives them a false impression of Christianity. They pretend they are too high and holy to talk about normal things with people. Or if someone tells a joke - and I don't mean a dirty joke, but I don't mean a real easy one either - if a believer tells it, that's fine. But if an unbeliever tells it, you know, "I'm too holy to laugh." You see, people get confused about this because Scripture, of course, speaks of the natural man (who does not accept the things of God) and the spiritual man. But he's not saying we cease to be natural there, but as a Christian you're not governed by the natural realm. You have the Holy Spirit so you're more than the natural. But you don't cease to be natural. There's many more verses I can prove that point from, but for time, I will just give you a few closing applications.

These are things we've experienced back home in Manchester or in Switzerland. I will sometimes hear Christians talk about going visiting their lost parents or spending some time with them or other lost family members, as if it's some great chore. You know, "We have nothing to talk about. We can't talk about anything." And, I generally point out to people because normally this is asked about. And I remember one time, a brother was asking me and there were three Christian girls cooking in the kitchen. And I said, "Listen to their conversation. They are not speaking about Scripture at the moment, they are talking about normal things. Everyday things." You see, my point was, you talk about those things with Christians, so why can't you talk about those things with non-Christians? It gives a completely false impression of what Christianity is, because you're not like that when you're around Christians. It's only when Christians are around unbelievers they can become tense if they fall into this.

Another time I see this is, sometimes, a Christian would say, "I've got to go to a family wedding this Saturday, (a lost family wedding or some family party or some other event,)" and then they'll say in their next word, "but it's a chance to witness to them." Now listen, I am not against sharing the Gospel with them if the Lord opens the opportunity there. But you see what's wrong there? They can't just enjoy and show love and be kind to their family members. They have to give an apology to other Christians why they are going. And so what normally happens is they go to those things and they are on edge all the time because they've told everyone else that they are going to preach the Gospel to someone. And so, they either make a mess of it doing it mechanically or they go home feeling condemned because they never opened their mouth. The only impression they gave to everyone else is "Wow, that person is really on edge." I think it was brother Ryan Skinner who told us the other day that sometimes when Christians can be like that with lost people, the impression they give is like the Children of the Corn coming at them.

But you know, when you're reaching, when you're around lost people, you don't have to witness to them all the time or every time. Don't appear standoffish or unnatural. You know, those you're with regularly, again, show them your life first. Show them a change - how kind and warm you are - and they'll see a difference. You know, I hear this phrase today, "You can't live the Gospel." Has that person never read 1st Peter? The whole book is about living the Gospel, as the brother said before, "We are the fifth gospel." Treasure in hidden vessels. It's a lot harder, it takes a lot more love to live the Gospel around people than just to say a few words and

run. You know, tick that box and leave them. Again, I always ask that question, What impression of the kingdom of God am I giving unbelievers? Am I giving them an impression that being a Christian looks something like a Pharisee, or that I really love them and I'm kind to them as Christ was to me. That it's a relationship with a person, it's joy.

Let's pray. Our Father, I know these words, these truths have been so helpful in my own life and for other brothers and sisters in Europe. And I know, what was once tense relationships, the walls have come down so quickly by applying these truths of persevering and not being quickly to cut off and defriend; and just being normal, natural, taking an interest in people, and showing love. People have even come to Christ who was once separated from the Christian by an impression of a pharisee. I pray You would help the brothers and sisters here, all who hear this word, help us Lord to be in their lives, to be reaching our lost family members, neighbors, those whom You put our way. We need Your Holy Spirit to have this love like Paul, so we don't quickly cut people off. We thank You that You did not cut us off. That, Lord, how badly we have been even since our conversion, never mind before. And yet, You persevered with us and You were cut off in our place. We praise You in Jesus' name, Amen.