

The Christian's responsibilities

Part 1

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| Speaker | Frank Wallace |
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[00:00:01] They are all important and we'll begin in Acts chapter 17, the Acts of the Apostles chapter 17 and we'll read from verse 22. Acts 17 verse 22. Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription to the unknown God, whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands. Neither is worshipped with men's hands as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life and breath and all things, and hath made [00:01:04] of one blood all nations of men, but to dwell on all the face of the earth, and have determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord. If happily they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being, as certain also your own poets have said, for we are also his offspring. For as much then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone, graven by art and man's device, the times of this ignorance God winked at. But now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him [00:02:05] from the dead. Now 1st Timothy chapter 2. 1st Timothy chapter 2 and verse 3, the end of the verse, God our Savior, God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time. Now just one verse in Romans chapter 6.

Romans chapter 6 and verse 22. But now being made free from sin and become [00:03:09] servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. That's a verse extra from what I intended to read. Ephesians chapter 1.

Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having [00:04:02] predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. Now chapter 5 and verse 1.

Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.

What a tremendous subject to occupy our hearts and our minds, to consider our relationships with God and responsibilities that flow from those [00:05:05] relationships. The very first thing for our hearts to consider, what a tremendous honor and dignity and privilege that we can even consider ourselves to be in relationship with God. He's so infinite, so glorious, so unspeakable in his greatness, and yet we poor creatures as we are, privileged to be in relationship with him. Very, very difficult to know where to begin in a subject of this kind, but it has been impressed upon me that we might consider a little at the very outset, God as creator. I feel we must begin there. Whether people acknowledge God as creator, the fact is that scripture represents this. [00:06:05] Scripture reveals it to us, that the great and wonderful God whom we adore as father was also the creator, and the beginning of the relationship that the creature had with him was in the garden, when God created Adam and then Eve, and they were there in relationship with him in a very close bond indeed, the creator and the creature in happy communion. It pleased God to come down in the cool of the evening and commune with Adam in the garden that he had created for the blessing of man. What a tremendous thing for our hearts to consider, and all through the Bible, from the beginning to the end, we find God presented as the creator. Man cannot go any further back in his relationship with God, except when [00:07:05] we come to the divine revelation of God's purpose in Christ before other worlds were created. That's a different matter, but in his actual dealings with man, we must go back to the garden, the creator God. It's impossible for me to speak adequately of God as creator, but there are many portions of the Word of God that will bring this home to our hearts in a very powerful way, and if we read the last chapters of the book of Job, then we'll see the greatness and majesty of the creator. It resulted in the conversion of Job. Job was humbled as God presented himself to Job in his glory, his greatness, his skill, his understanding. A unique God, there is only one creator. Men at large, they refuse to [00:08:04] bow to this God. They refuse to acknowledge that there is such a God. The schools, the media, every conceivable avenue of thought that is presented to man is to present man as God, that there is no creator, but we as Christians believe the inspired revelation of the Word of God, that all that we see around us began from the hands of the creator, and has subsisted and continued because of the one who created it and upholds it. And so, dear friends, I feel we must begin here, and this is where Paul began with those philosophers in Athens. They had no Old Testament scriptures. They were steeped in their intellect, steeped in their philosophies. God was an unknown God. The gods that they did worship were [00:09:01] gods of man's creation, and Paul indicated this in a very clear way. Gold and silver, the art of man's imagination. No, says Paul, there is a God, the unknown God that you've reared an altar to. I will make him known to you, and that God, he said, is the creator, the Lord of the heavens and the earth. My, what a God! What power, what skill, what understanding, what knowledge, what glory, all this we find in creation. Never let us as Christians forget that this is one of the unique glories of God, the creator. And again, I say from the beginning to the end of the Bible, we find references to this. Indeed, the fourth chapter of Revelation reminds us that all things were created for his pleasure, and we find, too, in many, many instances that God comes to the aid of his people and [00:10:04] exerts his creatorial power, as he did at the Red Sea, for instance, an evidence of his power over the elements. And the Lord Jesus Christ, when here upon earth, demonstrated that he was the creator, manifest in flesh, changes water into wine, walks upon the waves, raises the dead, curses the fig tree, many, many ways in which the Lord Jesus exhibited that he was the creator. But there was a relationship that the creature had with the creator, and it was a very wonderful one. But what were the responsibilities? Obedience. And you remember when Adam and Eve were enjoined not to partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? They were responsible to the God who had created them to obey their God and to do [00:11:03] what pleased him,

not to be marked by any self-will. You know the answer. You know the result. They disobeyed. And sad to say, from that moment onwards, there was one continual disobedient life in men and women, a disobedient principle that expressed itself again and again in individuals, in families, in nations, a continual refusal of the claims of God upon them. Very, very sad indeed.

And this is what Paul presents in Acts chapter 17. Previously, he had spoken to those people about the death and resurrection of Christ, and they had mocked him. Now, he says, I'll present a God who has a claim upon you as creator.

You are the work of his hands, and you ought to listen to him when he commands [00:12:06] you. He commands every man everywhere to repent. And they ought to have bowed and accepted that, and instead of that, some of them mocked. There is an outstanding example of this in Belshazzar, the king of Babylon. And you remember that Daniel said to him, the God in whose hands thy breath is, thou hast not glorified.

And I believe with all my heart that God has the breath of every creature in his hands. And if we live, we live because God allows us to live. If we die, it's because our time has come, and the Creator has indicated that it is time to come, and the time has come. And of course, the Lord Jesus Christ, because of who he has exercised his right in that, he has the keys of death and of Hades. And so it's a very solemn thing when people refuse to bow to the [00:13:06] creatorial claims of God. Well then, these people mocked. But praise God, there were some who believed, and they accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, and they came into a greater and higher relationship with God, a Savior God. And we want to speak about that. But again, before we leave it, never let us minimize the infinite greatness of God as Creator. I want to say this again and again. It's one of the unique glories that belong to him. And I believe if we understood it rightly, not only in our responsibilities would we obey him, we would be moved to a spirit of worship, a spirit of reverence, as we take account of the greatness of God. We do have one outstanding example of this, [00:14:03] where worship was produced in the heart of a saint, because he considered the creator. And we read of this in Romans chapter 1, where Paul, occupied with a great deal of the departure of man from God, he says, and they worshiped the creature more than the creator. And immediately he mentioned the creator's name. He says, who is blessed forever, amen. A note of worship immediately from the heart of the Apostle. And I believe these three things should mark us as Christians. Reverence, worship, and obedience, because of the unique glory that belongs to God as Creator. But then, no need for me to tell you the way how man departed from God and got worse and worse and worse. Something had to be done. As we read in the early chapters of Romans, because of their disobedience, God [00:15:04] gave them up. God gave them up. God gave them up. Three times it says that. And if he had given them up forever, there would have been no blessing. They would have been lost forever. But he says, I'm going to change them. They've changed many things in relation to my claims upon them. Now he says, I'll change them. And he did, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is the wonder of 1st Timothy chapter 2, that God is a Savior God. What a wonderful glory belonging to him, a Savior God. Oh, how entitled he was to sweep the scene in judgment. He did that once in the flood and promised he would never do it again, not by water. Time will come when he'll sweep with judgment in a different form, but never again by water. And oh, how entitled he is to deal with mankind in judgment. One of his glories [00:16:07] too. And yet, at the present moment, he's a Savior God. For nearly 2,000 years, a Savior God. And the means he employed to be a Savior God was by sending his son into this world. Oh, how willing the son was to come. Praise God for that. Came into this world, lived a blameless life, not a sin, not a thought of a sin, nothing of disobedience in him. Wonderful life, marvelous life, a demonstration of the greatness of God in a man in this world. Then

that glorious man gave his life, a ransom for all. Paul says, there is one God. That one God is the Creator God. There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

[00:17:07] I want to say a word, dear brethren, dear friends, about tendencies that have been with us for a long time, but unfortunately are growing in momentum and are growing in emphasis. And that is that there are many ways to God. That the exclusive Christ, as we know the word presents him, is not the exclusive way to God. Mohammed and Moses and Buddha and Confucius and any great man will also lead us to God.

So it doesn't matter what kind of religion we believe, as long as we believe in some kind of religion, that's all right. We're all together in this one matter of understanding God. We're all in this one matter of getting to some kind of heaven. It doesn't matter if [00:18:03] there are different opinions about what heaven is. We're all in the matter. Well, that's not what Paul says. Paul says there is one God and there is one mediator, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, ready to be revealed in due time.

Well, then, this cuts the feet away from this prevailing notion that is gathering strength. There is only one way to God, and that's through Christ. And if he's a Savior God, there is no other God. There is no other form of salvation. There is only one way of salvation, and that way is through our Lord Jesus Christ. Dear friends, don't be beguiled by the imaginations of men today. Don't be beguiled by this false form of charity that would in love, [00:19:03] a misplaced kind of love, that would embrace every form of thought. Not at all. There is an exclusive gospel, an exclusive Savior that excludes all else and leaves us one glorious man, the one who can lead us to God, a Savior God. Oh, how wonderful that God should be a Savior God. What resources of love, what resources of patience, what resources of grace and mercy and holiness and truth are found in this Savior God. Not standing aloof and asking man to find his way to himself in the best way they can. Oh, no. A Savior God who provides the way to himself, in the giving of his own son to a death and sorrow that was past our understanding. Oh, [00:20:03] what a wonderful Savior God. All right, there is the relationship that we have today. Because of the salvation that he has given to us, we stand in a wonderful relationship to him, and that is a relationship of righteousness. By, that's wonderful. I think I've said this, perhaps you've heard me saying it often, that when I was a young believer, the thought of righteousness repelled me. It was something that made me afraid, something that seemed to put God at a great distance in an austere kind of presentation. But since I've learned what it means, it's far from being austere. It's far from being far off as far as God is concerned. It's something that's most wonderful, that because of the salvation that God has brought about through Christ, I now stand in his presence and he hasn't a single thing to say to me. I'm there in his [00:21:04] presence just as he wants me to be in righteousness, according to his blessing, according to what he has made me in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why so often we find in the Bible the term justified, made righteous, to stand in the presence of God without a single sin, a single stain, a single fault attaching to me, all gone in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now isn't that wonderful? I don't suppose there is one person here that feels regret at things they have said and done and thought in their past lives. I know I regret many, many things, but I realize that the death of the Lord Jesus was so wonderful, so great, the power of his blood was [00:22:01] so efficacious, that now I stand in the presence of God in him and there's not a single thing that God has to say to me about those things that I regret. They're all gone, every one of them. Cleanse the way in his precious blood and I stand before God in all the righteousness that he has clothed me in. He looks at me, if I can say so, through his own beloved Son and sees me in all the perfection of his work and his person. That's the relationship. What a tremendous relationship. We don't worry, am I a real Christian? We don't worry, am I sufficiently

honest before God to merit his favor? We don't think like that when we understand the relationship that we have as a result of salvation. We accept fully and clearly what God has done for us and rest upon that with faith and with assurance. What a relationship. The responsibilities, ah yes, very, very great [00:23:09] responsibilities. If we have a positional place before God in righteousness, there should be a practical response in righteousness in our lives and that's very, very important. Not only to claim a position, which we can do on the authority of the word of God, but to answer to it in consistency of life so that we are righteous before God in practice. We just need to quote one verse to prove that and in the second epistle of Timothy, Paul says that we are to pursue righteousness and in that context it may mean turning aside from things that have a religious flavor but have no warrant from the word of God. And then in other portions, we find practical righteousness in [00:24:03] everyday living, in morals, in home life. Now these things we hope to touch on another night, but righteousness in every feature of our lives, honesty, integrity, uprightness before God and doing the things that are right in his sight. I like to quote this statement because I feel it's a most comprehensive statement and a true statement, one by an aged teacher, Mr. Darby, and he said, righteousness is being consistent with every relationship into which God has brought us. Now that's a simple statement in terms, but I believe it is profound in its meaning. Righteousness is consistency with every relationship into which God has brought us, whether it be in relationship with himself or with Christians or in the world, employers, [00:25:03] employees, every form of relationship that exists, the Christian is to be practically righteous in them. Well then, that's a very great responsibility indeed. If we are governed as creatures by the greatness of God as creator, we are governed as saved people by the greatness of the salvation that God has brought to us in Christ. And the more we enjoy that salvation and the more we appreciate it, the more we will desire to be faithful to this wonderful relationship into which he has brought us. Marvelous to stand in the presence of God, righteous. Oh, how wonderful. We find in the last verse of first Corinthians chapter one, that Christ is made unto us righteousness. That tells us the position that we have [00:26:05] before God and him. But as we proceed in the epistle, we find that the Corinthian believers were far below their position in actual practice, evil lives, dissension and unhappiness amongst them as believers, parties, striving for position, even wrong notions about the truth, many things that the Corinthian believers were wrong in practice. It didn't affect their position that was in Christ, that was inviolate. Nothing could destroy that. But how sad it was that they were not acting in consistency with the position into which God had brought them. So wonderful Savior God, and he deserves the best from our lives. He deserves that we give a practical expression to this salvation day by day. Our lives, salvation from everything [00:27:08] that's contrary to God and eventually complete emancipation from this world and free to be in the presence of God with bodies of glory. That's final salvation, wonderful salvation, wonderful Savior God. Oh, that we knew him better and served him better. Now we come to Romans chapter six and verse 22. But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life. One time I thought we might take up some of the verses in the epistle to the Romans when dealing with this matter of relationship, because this treatise of the gospel deals with so many [00:28:03] relationships, the believer with God, many wonderful relationships indeed. However, we've gone so far and now we just have a little touch on this chapter. But you know that from the very beginning, Paul shows the utter depravity of man and his inability to get right with God by any means of his own. And as we mentioned already, God changes the man now through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And after chapter three, he indicates many wonderful blessings that come to the believer through faith. And step by step, he takes them on to that final moment, the highest point of man's recovery to God, when he joys in God through the reconciliation that had been effected, the highest point in man's recovery to God. Then he deals with a very [00:29:01] solemn matter indeed. And from the middle of chapter five and onwards, we find Paul describing how those believers can get free from the power of sin, not sins, the power of sin, this root principle that's in everybody's life, a wicked

venom that runs through our veins, if you like, that produces sins. This awful principle that came into the world in Adam and has continued ever since and is in your life and mine. And the end of chapter seven shows how the man unravels in his mind that there is a principle of sin in him that he doesn't want to obey, but finds himself unable to combat. And then comes to the glorious realization that there is a deliverance for him. And that is through the Lord Jesus Christ. And in chapter six that we have [00:30:04] read, it says, now we've got our freedom from sin. I don't know, or you must have, every Christian has this struggle against sin. And I remember vividly in my life when this verse came before me, having got your freedom from sin, now being made free from sin. And I take account of my life and I say, no, I'm not free from sin. Sin can come so easy into my life and I so easily succumb to it. Is Paul wrong? Is he misleading us? Why no, Paul's stating the truth. He says, you've got your freedom from sin. How have we got our freedom from sin? Through this great salvation. Through the death and resurrection of Christ, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, that we have [00:31:02] the wherewithal to conquer sin in our lives. We were born slaves to sin. We were servants to sin. I'm sure we've all known that in one shape or another. But now Paul says, you've got your freedom from that. God has delivered you from that. He's given you the power to get away from that. And thank God when we take advantage of what he has provided and we get the power over sin. We're not talking about temptation that can come upon any Christian at any moment and can succumb to it. We're talking about the practicing of sin. Day by day, doing evil things deliberately, wickedly. This is what Paul's talking about. Being born slaves to sin, born men to sin. Now he says, you've got your freedom from that. Paul succumbed to failure. So did Peter. So did John. All Christians have to face this, that sudden temptation can come and they fail. Sad if they do. [00:32:05] Good for us if we're powerful enough to refuse it. But we can't state this most emphatically that every Christian has been set free from the power of sin. And they're in a relationship to God. He is the master and we are his servants. This is what it says. Being now made free from sin and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life. What I want to emphasize is that those relationships are succeeding each other, the creator, the savior. Now we have him as master. We are his born slaves. This is the real meaning of servants, a born slave. My, that would seem to be a very solemn consideration that we are his born slaves. A tyranny? No, not for a minute. [00:33:07] An austere kind of God? Not for a minute. I want you to consider, dear friends, what a dignity is conferred upon us by being the servants of God. Oh, what a wonderful privilege it is that our lives are spent in some form in serving him. We're not talking about being preachers, expositors, or missionaries, or any of the great things that so often reach the public eye. Not that kind of thing. A day by day, what? Doing the will of God. Because that's what it means to be a born slave. But I first want to emphasize the privilege. And it is a privilege to have such a master. Is he austere? He is holy. Is he unkind? Unthinkable. Not a tyrant, a despot?

[00:34:04] Yes. A despot in our ordinary language means someone very harsh and austere. That's not what the Bible means. The Bible means when it speaks about a despot, one who has complete control over us. Now we've spoken about his creatorial claim. We've spoken about his salvation claim, or redemptive claim. And because of that, we are his servants. He has this claim, this despotic claim upon us that we belong to him. We are bought with a price, and such a price. And every Christian is responsible to live to God, to do his will. The relationship, a wonderful one. Such a unique, glorious master, infinitely beyond our understanding and glory and greatness. And yet he deigns to use you, and me, and every other Christian in his service. And his service [00:35:06] is very, very wide and inclusive. And we thank God for every Christian that exists in the world today, who in some measure seeks to do his will. And that individual Christian is responsible directly to his God, his master, the bondman. In those days, Paul was writing, when a person was a bond slave, he belonged to his master, just like any other piece of furniture or anything else he possessed. And he

was there to do his master's will. If his master wanted to kill him, he could kill him. And nobody could say anything about it. He just belonged to his master in every shape and form. No such thing as trade union hours. No such thing as rights. There was one predominant will, and that was the master. And if the master said, do this, the servant did it. If he said, go, [00:36:05] he went. If he said, come, he went to his master. That's the kind of thing that the centurion spoke about, and it illustrates in a very wonderful way what it is to be under the will of God. Oh, what a tremendous honor that any of us, in any shape and form, can serve this wonderful, marvelous God. And then the responsibility every day to consider, what can I do for God's will? What can I do to please him? Oh, I think it's a most important thing for every Christian to bow the knee before the day begins and to commit oneself to God that one might do what God wants one to do. That's a tremendous privilege to avoid evil and to do good. Not [00:37:03] only to be negative in avoiding evil, that's important, but to be avoiding evil in order to do good, to be positive in order to do the will of God. And it's a marvelous thing. In the first chapter of Romans, we find Paul being prospered by the will of God. And it is a most prosperous thing to do the will of God. The men who stand out in the pages of scripture, there is one, of course, who stands out unique, the Lord Jesus Christ, in perfection. But the others, men and women like ourselves, are men who did the will of God, and they pleased God, and God honored them, and their names are included for us in the inspired word for our encouragement and as examples for us. Wonderful responsibility because of a wonderful relationship that we have. In the past, not so much now, when Jack's as good as his master, that's the prevailing sentiment, [00:38:06] but when I was a boy, and long before that too, many people serve the great houses of the land, the elite of the land, and consider it a privilege to be honored to serve the nobles, and the dukes, and the elite, then it was a very wonderful thing to be allowed to serve in such an establishment. That's all gone, of course, well to some extent anyway. But if we apply this to God, ah then, it has its true character. Tremendous thing to be a servant of God, a bond slave of God, such a master, and such a service. Now we turn to Ephesians chapter one.

A creator, a savior, a master, well there might be a sense of responsibility attaching to these [00:39:09] designations of God that might cause us to have some measure of fear, although we shouldn't, some measure of reluctance to be in such relationships. Again, I say it ought not to be. When we come to these two portions that we have read from the epistle to the Ephesians, we find relationships that are infinitely beyond our understanding or our ability to express. Listen to Paul's language. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who had blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Now then, whose tongue is able to expound such a passage? Every spiritual blessing, and this wonderful God whom we should [00:40:03] extol, whom we should make much of, because he has blessed us in a wonderful way in Christ, according as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Marvelous thing. Before ever the worlds were created, before ever angels were in existence, before ever any creature existed, there was the Godhead. In all their counsel of love and glory and blessing, considering you and me, unbelievable, but it's true, he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Individually, by name, this is what it means, he knew you, he knew me, long before the worlds were created and purposed us for blessing in his well beloved son. Incredible, but this is what the word of God [00:41:03] teaches us and we believe it with all our hearts, although we have to confess that we find it very, very difficult to understand, except we believe in a God with illimitable knowledge and power and blessing and love and because of that we can understand it in that light, but to think that he thought about us, so insignificant and yet before ever time began, he thought about us and he blessed us in Christ and what a place, holy and without blame before him in love, what an environment. Then he goes on to say, having predestinated us or marked us out unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory

of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. [00:42:06] We might pause here and say, well yes, this is a marvelous place, marvelous blessing that we should be adopted as God's sons. Yes, wonderful, but we would miss the point of this statement if we didn't take account of the pleasure that God derived from giving us this blessing. This is the whole thrust of what Paul is saying, according to the good pleasure of his will. This pleased God, this gave God a great deal of delight and joy to bring you and me into a position of sons before him. Now the term adoption reminds us that we had no right to this place, it was a blessing that God gave us, we were not entitled to it, neither by race [00:43:01] nor by moral fitness or any other reason whatsoever. We get this position of a son before God the Father on the basis of his wonderful love. It's not so much a sphere of responsibility. You don't talk, you fathers, you don't talk about the responsibility of your son saying to you, father, that's a responsibility he has. It's not, it's a joy he has, it's a response he has, it's a right that he has belongs to the position. It's not a responsibility, it's the logical outcome of being a son. And this is what God the Father has done for us, for you, for me, and of course the sisters have to accustom themselves to this masculine idea that they're sons just as brothers are, we're all sons in this place of sonship. And it's a wonderful thing and I don't find anywhere in the Bible, in the New Testament teaching, I don't find anywhere that [00:44:06] responsibility belongs to this place of sonship. It's rather the response of love, the worship, the great and glorious privilege to be in the presence of the Father and say to him, father, in the spirit of the Son that fills our hearts and enables us to respond to him in a way that gives the Father pleasure. It's not only that he gives, it gives him pleasure to bring us into this place of sons, it's the pleasure he derives from hearing people address him as father. I think this is the outcome of this wonderful position. Now you fathers, I'm sure it gives you a great deal of joy when your little boy says daddy and as your son grows up, when he addresses you as father, there's a joy in it, a happy joy that's in your heart when the son addresses you [00:45:02] in this way. And I believe it's the same in this wonderful relationship that God has brought us into, the sovereignty of his love that chose us for it and gave it to us, accepted in the beloved. Who is the beloved? Well, there cannot be anyone else except the Son of God. This is my beloved son in the banks of the Jordan. This is my beloved son on the Mount of Transfiguration, the beloved. Having one son, his only son, his beloved son, he sent him. The Father sent the son, the son of his love. That's the beloved and we are accepted in him. My, that's wonderful. That's really the height of the Christian blessing because it will go on and on and on throughout all eternity. No diminishing of this position of sonship that each believer has. [00:46:04] It's the greatest blessing that the Christian can consider. You might say it's wonderful to serve him, to be a successful preacher, a profound expositor, and many other things of that nature. Yes, indeed, very important in their place, but to be a son, to be in the position before the father of his own beloved, unique son, is something beyond our understanding, but true for faith. Ah, that's it. Faith accepts the broken because we are accepted in the beloved. We're there in association with that glorious, unique son that ever was with the father before time began, was manifested here in manhood, is now at the right hand of God, and every true believer is accepted in him and brings the father such wonderful delight. Sonship, marvelous place, referred to in our translation as [00:47:08] adoption, a place that we have no right to, but we have it on the sovereignty of the love of God, and we only have it in association with God's unique son. Now lastly, for a few minutes, chapter five. Be ye therefore followers of God, or as it could be translated, imitators of God. Be ye therefore imitators of God as dear children and walk in love as Christ also had loved us and had given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor. Imitators of God as dear children. We should say here that when we get the term adoption, [00:48:06] it's a place that we have no right to. We said this already, but we're there on the basis of the sovereignty of God's love towards us. When we are his children, we are children by new birth. We are born again. We become his children, and we are capacitated to be his imitators. We can be like God. Now in natural things, it's quite a usual thing for a son to imitate his father,

imitate his characteristics, imitate his way of speech, imitate his principles and ways of life. That's quite a common thing. Want to be like my father? Well then, in connection with this relationship, we are capacitated through having the nature of God, and I use that expression, or should I say the life of God, we have this because we can imitate him, or we're [00:49:07] capacitated to be like him, and we're capacitated to imitate him in all his ways. My, that's a tremendous statement to make, but the Bible says it, be ye imitators of God, and because we have this new nature, because we're born again, because we possess the Holy Spirit, yes, we can be like God. Now, if we say, how does this work out? Well, we turn to the Old Testament, and David said, is there any of the house of Saul left that I may show unto them the kindness of God? That is, that David was imitating God. God had been so kind to him, and God had been so kind to so many. Now he says, I want to be kind to the house of Saul. Really, they don't deserve kindness, neither did David. Oh, he says, I want to be like God. I want to show the kindness of God, [00:50:08] and so we can be imitators of God. Wonderful relationship that we are the children of God. Solemn responsibility to be like him in our ways, to forgive, to be kind, to be holy, to be true, to be upright, to be righteous, all the different ways in which God is expressed, and we cannot stress one at the expense of another. We have to think of the great way that God is presented to us in Christ and imitate that. Now, we live in the plastic age where plastic can be made to look like anything at all. Well, it's not that kind of imitation. It's not a spurious, valueless imitation, not for a minute. It's a true imitation, the true features of God that can come out in your [00:51:04] life and mine because we are his children. That's the position that we have through new birth, and it's not in any way something to be despised. It's something to rejoice in. It's a wonderful place. God has given it to us, and we have it in virtue of the death and resurrection and ascension of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit. That's what makes these things workable and true and vital. I have a little piece of poetry at home. I don't think I can quote it correctly here, but I'll quote the gist of it, and this is a man saying, My little boy confessed some childish wrong, and kneeling at my knee, he said, O God, make me like Daddy, big and strong. I know you can. And when he went to bed, [00:52:08] I kneeled beside his bed and confessed my sin and said, O God, make me like this little boy, true, trusting, so innocent, so full of faith. The father was imitating, in some measure, the little boy, even going beyond him. But, O dear brethren, when we think of such a God to imitate, what a challenge, and we might feel it's something we cannot aspire to, impossible. Praise God, it's a glorious reality, and thank God it's in operation. Thank God there are many evidences of the imitating of God. Many, many evidences in the lives of men and women and boys [00:53:02] and girls, the features that are so pleasing to God, that were expressed in Christ in perfection, now being produced in the lives of Christians in the power of the Holy Spirit. A glorious answer to the relationship in which they are. Well then, that's for you, and that's for me. Well then, this is only the tip of the iceberg, if we can so speak. The many relationships that we have in relation to God are numerous, and they present problems, the problems of response and responsibility, but we trust that what has been said tonight may be sufficient to indicate to us what a wonderful God we have, and what wonderful blessings he has bestowed upon us, and if we enjoy them and appropriate them, then they will give us a desire to be true to the God who has blessed us. May we be encouraged for his namesake.