

# Apologists For Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] Although it will be mostly verses 8 and 9, and then from verse 15 through to 17.

Finally, all of you have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for reviling, evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary bless.

For to this you are called, that you may obtain a blessing. And then at verse 15, the end of verse 14, Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

Yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience. Now there are a number of passages like this, very similar, in the New Testament.

Particularly so in Romans chapter 12, verses 9 to 19. Ephesians chapter 4, and verses 1 to 3. Colossians chapter 3, verses 12 to 15.

[ 1 : 16 ] And also 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, and verses 13 to 22. These of course are written by the Apostle Paul, whereas here we have the letter of 1 Peter.

Let's just read a couple of these for you. Ephesians 4, verses 1 to 3. And if we take the one in Colossians chapter 3, verses 12 to 15, we can see the similarity there as well.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another.

And if anyone has a complaint against another, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you. Now one of the reasons we're pointing out that is that it appears from these passages that in the apostolic church, the church in the time of the apostles, this was a very important block of teaching, or type of teaching, that was given to Christians.

It wasn't simply the theology of Christ's atoning death and his resurrection and other matters like that related to the work of Christ.

[ 2 : 48 ] It appears that it was very important to the apostles that they actually presented these truths as well, as to how Christians were to conduct themselves in their life together and towards the world outside.

The apostles obviously saw that that was very important for the church. Now the church was seen to be engaged in and fulfilling these particular characteristics of the Christian life.

Unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, and a tender heart. And as Peter here moves to what really forms the most part of what's left of the letter, right through to the end of chapter 5, we'll see that he's really moving in to deal mostly now with the topic of Christian suffering.

And how Christian suffering relates to a number of other issues that Christians must take note of to practice in their own lives, and indeed how that relates to their placement in the world as well.

Now of course, we've already seen that Peter's touched on that in the letter up to this point. But from now on, especially from verse 13 onwards, he's dealing with that as his main topic of interest and instruction.

[ 4 : 10 ] And we'll need to look at that as he introduces it here for us from verses 8 here through to 17. In other words, what Peter is really, we can keep this in mind not just for this evening, but as we go through with the study of these passages in the future.

As he's dealing with Christian suffering in the setting in which they are found as people who are being mistreated and misrepresented and perhaps even persecuted for what they believe, as he writes this to them, he is really saying to them, you have to keep in focus that suffering is not the opposite of blessing.

Suffering is not the opposite of blessing. Sometimes we can fall into that trap that Satan particularly will set for us, and where he will try and persuade us that because we have certain elements of suffering, certain types of suffering in our lives, or even repeated sufferings, or things that just simply don't seem to go away, how can you possibly be in the favor of God?

How can you possibly have God's approval? How can you possibly be a Christian in the proper sense? Well, Peter is really repeatedly emphasizing this for those that he's writing to. Of course, that's what we are faced with tonight as we come to this passage and to what remains, God willing, of Peter's letter.

Suffering is not the opposite of blessing. What Peter is going to show is that much suffering for God's people actually contains God's blessing channel towards us.

[ 5 : 50 ] I'll put it the other way, that God's blessing very often comes through the periods of suffering and the providence in which he has brought suffering into their experience.

And there are people here who know that very well and very likely better than I do. Through your suffering as a Christian, through the ways in which God and his providence has brought suffering into your life, you've experienced that blessing of God through these sufferings and in those sufferings and above those sufferings so that you are conscious of what Peter is saying here, that suffering is not by any means for the Christian the opposite of blessing.

Well, he says here that we first of all, as Christians we're called to blessing. In verses 8 to 14. This is what he's really saying.

We're called to blessing so that we can obtain a blessing. And let's look at these elements that we have first of all in verses 8 and 9.

Then he quotes from Psalm 34 to just reinforce what he's saying. But this is what he's saying to them. As a people, and it's important that we bear this in mind, he's not just saying this, and indeed some of this is impossible anyway, unless you think of the collected gathering of God's people or God's people even if they are as here, scattered throughout these regions.

[ 7 : 22 ] There's still a unity. There's still a people of God. And he's saying to them now, as he's saying to us tonight, as a congregation of God's people, finally all of you, that's all of you together, have unity of mind.

Now he mentions five characteristics. And just like the fingers and the thumb of your hand, there are five characteristics that are in a very close relationship to each other, but they all have a common root.

All of your fingers and your thumb, they have independent movement, but they're related to each other through the main part of your hand. And what he's saying to them here is that unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, tender heart, and a humble mind, are actually very closely related, but they are all rooted in what they have in common in Christ.

That is where they all actually have their root, these important characteristics. Let's look at them each one briefly. It'll have to be very briefly, because what he's saying actually is, be Christ-like in your fellowship.

Be Christ-like in your life as a church. Be Christ-like in your relationships. And then he breaks that down into, that's really what it amounts to, but if you break it down, then these are the fine things.

[ 8 : 46 ] How he says, unity of mind. Unity of mind. Because unless there's unity of mind, there's going to be disparity, there's going to be weakness.

Unity of mind is so important, and in these days when the apostle could draw upon the importance of unity in the likes of the Roman world, and in Roman military campaigns, and so on, how important it was to have unity of mind, to have the soldiers under the same mind, or in the same mindset as the commanders.

That's how it is for the church. That's how it is for the Christians. That's how it is for us as a congregation. We have the Lord's mind made over to us and revealed in his word. And what he's saying to us is, be united in mind together under that mind of the head, the mind of the commander.

Now that's important in everything that we do, to have a unity of mind in the essentials of the truth. To have a unity of mind in the priority that we must have in the Christian life and as a Christian church.

I'm not going to go into the details of what are our priorities, but you know yourselves what the fundamental matters of the truth are concerned. The work of Christ, the fatherhood of God, the atonement of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the death of Christ, the Christ's ministry from heaven, the Holy Spirit.

[ 10 : 17 ] The need to be born again. The reality of rebirth. All of these great truths, what he's saying here is, have unity of mind. Just imagine if this congregation were not united in mind about these things, well just imagine the knock-on effects of that.

How could we go forth with the gospel if we weren't sure what the gospel really is? How could we actually serve the Lord in a public way if we were at a disparity or at disunity about the essentials of his truth?

And you can follow that through into other areas of our lives as well. A unity of mind. And of course, it's important that he mentions the word mind, just as Paul does.

He gives such a lot of attention to mind. We could spend a long time on this and I'd better not get sidetracked on it, but the mind is so important. That's why he's mentioning it here, just as Paul does.

Have unity of mind. In other words, let your mind have, as you dwell upon those most important matters of the Christian faith, have collectively a unity of mind about them, in your attitude about them, in the way that you relay them and enjoy them together.

[ 11 : 34 ] Be united in that. Because that's where your strength is. Where you have that unity of mind. And secondly, sympathy. Have unity of mind.

Sympathy. Sympathy presupposes, again, more than just an individual. You need to have others with you in order to have a common sympathy.

And this is very similar to what he says, what Paul says in Romans chapter 12. For example, one of the verses there says, rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

In other words, have that knowledge of one another and that understanding of one another and that concern for one another that when you find these elements, these two opposite poles of experience, if you like, rejoicing on the one hand, weeping on the other hand.

Well, you rejoice with those who rejoice. You partake of their rejoicing, of the reasons for their rejoicing. You have an interest in that. In the same, in the other extreme, with those who weep.

[ 12 : 44 ] Those who are sorrowing. Whatever the source of the sorrowing is. It's your business and my business not to interfere unnecessarily in that, but to show sympathy, to be sympathetic, to minister sympathy.

And that's what we, together, must seek more and more to cultivate. As the second point he mentions, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love.

That doesn't, of course, exclude sisterly love. You know very well that the New Testament, at the time, focused on sonship and brotherliness, brotherliness, not to the exclusion of women or females, but simply emphasizing the fact that this is how they did it.

This is one family. This is a family who have been joined together by God through rebirth. That's what he's saying to those who are his, who are Christians, who are indeed in the Lord.

They are indeed a unit of family. Spiritually, they are a family. They have one father.

[ 13 : 53 ] They're related together through Christ, through their father in heaven. And that, of course, is a question for you and for me tonight, too. Are we still outside of this family, practically?

I know that you're here tonight partaking of the benefits that the family enjoys in the blessings of the gospel. That's so, so important and such an encouragement to us in the leadership of the church.

But you have to ask yourself, am I meaningfully, actually, in this family? Am I still someone who needs to have this rebirth spiritually? Have I been born again?

Have I come to Christ? Is in Christ God my Father? Over and above Him being God my Creator? Well, that's in the passing, but it is obviously a very important passing.

So it's unity of mind, it's sympathy, it's brotherly love, and fourthly he says, have all of you a tender heart. There's a really rich word in the Bible.

[ 15 : 04 ] In fact, when you go back to the Old Testament, especially, although the New Testament word is very closely related, the Old Testament word, you remember so often in the Old Testament, you have references to the inner parts, translated sometimes the bowels, in the older style translations, sometimes the inner parts, but it's a way by which the Old Testament expresses the tenderness of heart, the movings inwardly of a person at heart, when there's tenderness of heart.

Think of, in fact, how Isaiah appeals to God in chapter 63, where he's praying that great prayer that flows into chapter 64, oh, that thou would rend the heavens and come down.

Well, he asks God a question, and it's a question in which he appeals to God, and this is the language he used, where is the sound of your innermost parts towards me?

Are they restrained? You see, he's not conscious at that time of God's innermost being stirred up and blessing them because of their sin.

God has hidden his face from them. They are facing deportation. They are facing exile. It's their fault. And Isaiah, as he stands for the people and prays for them, is appealing to God, and he's appealing, as it were, to God's innermost parts.

[ 16 : 36 ] The tenderness of heart of God. And that's repeated similarly, at least in Hosea, chapter 11, where it's God himself who's represented as speaking, where he has this prospect of banishing Israel or putting them into exile.

How can I actually exercise this fierceness of my wrath? I will not do it. He says, why? Because my innermost parts, my compassions, different ways of translating it, are being kindled together.

You see, God is representing himself to us there as someone who has this inner agitation in himself. This innermost boiling, almost, if you like, of God's inner parts.

Of course, we know that that's figurative language of God. God is telling us that God is moved by what he sees and his tenderness of heart moves him to provide salvation for us.

Well, you can see other ones, if you like, you can go to the New Testament. The father of the prodigal son, when he saw the prodigal returning and his eyes are upon him and he's been waiting this long time for him to come back, he ran towards him.

[ 17 : 56 ] Why did he run towards him? What made him run towards him? He had compassion on him. His tender heart moved his feet and made him run towards him.

And you find the same in the Good Samaritan, Luke chapter 10. The priest and the Levite, they walked by, they went over to the other side.

This poor man who lay injured and had been robbed, mugged and lay in the street. They went past, they didn't want anything to do with him. Along came this Samaritan, the one you would least expect to do something for this man.

What do you read about him? He had compassion on him. Same word, same depth of heart, same inner stirrings of his soul. That's what made him do what he did.

That's what led to his action. It's not, you see, just his action that he took in looking after this man. It's where the action came from. Well, he's saying to us here, finally all of you, have a tenderness of heart.

[ 19 : 01 ] Have a tender heart. Be moved compassionately towards each other and towards others too. And then the fifthly he says, and a humble mind.

Well, a humble mind is not all that easy to find in the world of our day, is it? It doesn't really come very easily with materialism.

A humble mind is one that realizes, says, I have absolutely nothing from which I would do nothing at all by which I deserve God's favor to come towards me.

I have nothing whatsoever that commends me in the presence of God. Without his grace, I'm done for. God's favor. And you can see this humbleness of mind in Jesus himself, who though he was the Son of God, humbled himself to the death of the cross.

And with humbleness of mind went about the work of a servant. And in Philippians 2, as Paul, in that wonderful passage that we'll, God willing, need to look at sometime, Philippians 2, where he gives the great example, really, as it is, of Christ.

[ 20 : 25 ] Have this mind among yourself, or let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, which I think still is the best translation.

And then he goes on to speak about how Christ humbled himself. But what is there before that? Well, he says, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant or better than yourselves. That is difficult, isn't it?

If you know your own heart, you know how difficult that is. It's not at all difficult to think of yourself as, well, probably just as good as that person. And sometimes we go even into saying, well, I'm actually, I think I'm even better than that.

It comes to us all too easily because our hearts by nature are not humble. And Paul is saying, this is what grace does and this is what we've got to work at.

[ 21 : 34 ] But through God's grace and by your own application, let all of you, he says, have a humble mind. Realize what you are without Christ, without God's mercy, without others to be helpful to us in this life.

Humbleness of mind. Where do we have anything that really legitimately gives us a source of pride? Now, Paul is saying, if I'm going to boast, I'm going to boast in this one thing, in the cross of Christ.

I have nothing in myself to boast of, but I will boast in that. And that's all I need to boast in, to boast in the cross of Christ.

And because he says, to this you are called. And we say, don't repay evil for evil, reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless. Now just, in a word, let me just summarize that.

What he's saying is, instead of getting even by retaliation, we've gone over that earlier on in chapter 2. So all we need to say, I think, at this point is this.

[ 22 : 43 ] Instead of trying to get even with people who have hurt you or wronged you, by retaliating in kind in a similar fashion, your retaliation is to be a blessing, to bless them.

Again, Romans 12 has a very, very similar passage, similar emphasis, near the end of Romans 12. Where he says, don't curse, but instead of that, bless.

In other words, it's not enough for us that we don't curse other people. It's not enough for us that we don't actually revile back. It's not enough for us that we don't repay evil with evil.

You've got to go further than that, and that's the challenge. You have to bless. You have to positively come and want to do the best possible for that person.

That is, the only way you can do that is by God's grace and looking at the example of Christ because that's what he's done. So that's what he says first.

[ 23 : 50 ] You're called to blessing. But then secondly, we are prepared to witness. Verse 13, Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?

But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled. But in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

And we need to be fairly quick with us this evening. Setting Christ apart in the heart. Well, what does he mean by this? You notice, first of all, how it's in fact something that follows on from verse 14.

Where he says, have no fear of them. Who are they? The ones who are opposing them. The ones who are misrepresenting them. The ones who are dealing with them in a way that's unkind and sometimes even perhaps persecuting.

He says, don't be afraid of them. Have no fear of them. But instead of that fear, instead of being troubled about it, in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy.

[ 25 : 05 ] Now, different ways of translating that. But what he means, I think, is this. We could say translated as, the Lord Christ set apart in your heart.

Think of the context. He's dealing with people who are facing opposition, sometimes very difficult opposition. Opposition that could make them troubled. That could really cause them to be alarmed.

That could cause them to fear the opposition. Instead of that, he's saying, sanctify Christ in your heart or set Christ as Lord apart in your heart.

In other words, he's reminding them of who's in charge of their lives. And that they are to approach their difficulties and their opposition, the opposition they face, with this conviction that the Lord Christ, as they set him apart in their heart on a daily basis, that the Lord Christ is the ruler of these things and the ruler of these people.

What is it tonight that your worries are about? What are you troubled about? What are your concerns? What are you afraid of?

[ 26 : 24 ] Because we all have fears, troubles, concerns, sometimes. Sometimes they're amplified. Sometimes we question the way ahead.

What God is saying to us is, the Lord Christ set him apart in your heart. Ask yourself the question, where is this the source of my troubles, the source of my concern?

Where is it in relation to this Christ? Is it above this Christ or is he above it? Is it out with the control of this Christ or is he in complete control of it?

Is it something that's outside of his plan or has it always been his plan for me? And you know the answer to these. And what Peter is saying to these people who are suffering is, always remember this, nothing in your life is outside of the mastery of Christ, of his control, of his master plan.

He has the blueprint and it's being worked out in your experience and my experience as he knows best. So every day you live, the Lord Christ set apart in your heart.

[ 27 : 45 ] Remember to keep your confidence in Christ as the reigning Lord Christ. and take that into your circumstances every day you live.

There's a great painting by Rembrandt of the denial of Peter when he denied his Lord these three times.

And that masterpiece of a painting which is in a museum, in a gallery, a museum in Amsterdam. But when you look at it, you can see that the center part of that great painting is really where the focus is.

And there's a young girl there holding a candle and the light of that candle is reflecting the face of Christ. The face of Peter rather. Because she's close to Peter and Peter has his hand like this as she holds the candle and lights up his face.

He has his hand like this as if it's pointing backwards. And that carries you into the background of the picture, of the painting and in the background of the painting you find these shadowy figures. It's really dark.

[ 28 : 54 ] You can't make them out very well. But as you look at it more intently you see that one of them is chained and he's being led away and that is Jesus. The hand of Peter is just as it were dismissing this Christ at that moment.

He capitulated. He caved in. He was afraid when this girl challenged him that he was one of Christ's disciples. But what is he now?

What is he now as he writes this letter? Don't he say, be troubled and have no fear of them. But in your hearts instead of that, set the Lord Christ apart as Lord and carry that with you into all your circumstances.

And it's so important that we keep a sight of that Lordship of Christ in everything that happens in our lives.

Paul was the same. When he wrote to the Philippians, this is something that he mentioned in Philippians and in chapter 1 where he pointed out the fact that he was in prison and he was making it known that he was in prison and that he was in prison for a purpose.

[ 30 : 11 ] But this is what he said in chapter 1 and verse 12, I want you to know brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. So that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

And then a few verses later he goes on speaking about those who preach the gospel from wrong motives. But he says, never mind, he says, I am set here for the defense of the gospel.

He could have dispaired, he could have said to himself, why am I one of the chief apostles, one of God's chosen vessels to bring the gospel to the world of my day?

Why am I here? Why am I in this prison? Why has God dealt with me in this way? What is Jesus doing putting me here? Wouldn't it be better? Wouldn't it be a greater advantage to his cause if I was able to go about as previously with the gospel, to proclaim the gospel?

No, he says, I know who's in charge of this prison. It's not the jailer, it's not the Roman guards, it's Jesus, it's the Lord, and it's part of his plan, and his plan is being worked out, and others are being influenced by my being here, he says, in the gospel.

[ 31 : 39 ] How important to maintain in your sight and mine who's in charge of our lives, who's in charge of providence, who's in charge of the world, who's moving all the things that happen in the world as part of his master plan.

I know it's not clear to us many times, sometimes hardly at all, but that's who it is, and the Jesus, that in your heart you know as your Savior, your personal Savior, he's the Lord of the universe.

He knows exactly how each part moves in his plan to bring it to completion, how much more in my tiny life and yours is he in charge of everything that takes place.

Christ. Well, he's saying, sanctify, set Christ apart as Lord in your heart, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.

Now, it's important that we get the flow of the words here as well, because what Peter is saying is this, the Lord Christ set apart in your heart ready always.

[ 33 : 03 ] In other words, there's no break between setting Christ apart and being ready to give an account or a defense of the faith and of our faith, of our hope.

What he's saying is this, when you set Christ apart as Lord in your heart, that's your preparation. preparation. That's what immediately prepares you as you know him and get to know him and the more you get to know him, the more prepared and equipped is what he means, the prepared not just in mind being prepared to do something, but equipped for it.

Set the Lord Christ apart in your heart, always prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you. Now you go back again to Peter's denial.

This is not what he did. He caved in to this young girl, this girl who challenged him as to being a disciple of Jesus. Three times he capitulated.

And now he's saying, for anyone who asks you, make it an opportunity to tell them about your faith.

[ 34 : 22 ] make it an opportunity to tell them about to set forth your defense. And that's a technical word in a sense for it's an apologia from which you get the words, it's the apologia from which you get the word apologetics, which means technically, we learn it in college and seminary, it's that discipline by which we are taught how to defend the faith or to promote the faith, how to answer challenges to the faith and so on.

apologetics comes from this word apologia, it's not just being on the back foot and making a defense in that sense, because what Peter is saying is the best defense of the Christian is to present the gospel, is to present the gospel of Christ.

In other words, I think what he's saying is that in their sufferings and in their difficulties, they're being challenged, as you and I will be challenged. But the challenges that come to them actually bring opportunities, because some people at least are going to ask them, how can you possibly say you have hope when this is happening to you?

Explain to me how you can go on believing in a Christ you don't see, how you have such a thing as hope when you're in such a difficult situation.

You see, it opens up doors for questions and then answers. And what Peter is saying is, take that opportunity. Tell them why you've got hope. That it's based on the fact that Jesus rose from the dead.



[ 35 : 53 ] That you believe that he's enthroned in heaven. That you speak to him every day and you're not deluded. That you take his promises at face value. That you know he's coming again.

In other words, you present the gospel. You don't have to be an expert in languages or in speech. You don't have to be anything of that. You don't have to be an auditor.

All you have to do is tell them why you love Christ. Why your hope is in him. Why you can have this hope in this world as you are, even if you're in difficulties.

The hope that is in you. And yet he says, do it. Do it, he says, with gentleness and respect. having a good conscience.

Well, again, he's taking us to words that bring Jesus before us. The word respect is really literally the word fear. And it would seem best to actually have that as the fear of God or respect for God rather than just respect for other people.

[ 37 : 00 ] He is talking about making a defense, making a proclamation of the gospel, of your hope in Christ. when the opportunity is there, however it opens up. But he says, do it with gentleness.

It's a word that describes Jesus himself. You remember his great call, come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden, I will give you rest. For I am meek and lowly in heart.

I am gentle and lowly in heart. The gentleness of Jesus, the meekness of Christ. In other words, he's saying, when you go and are challenged about your faith, and maybe even ridiculed for what you believe, take the opportunity to present Christ, but don't do it in a high-handed way.

Don't do it as if you're superior to them. Don't do it in a way that takes up the same kind of spirit with which you're challenged. Do it with meekness.

Do it in a Christ-like way. Even if you're provoked, difficult though it is. Because that's what really proves to be effective.

[ 38 : 15 ] And with respect or with fear, the fear of God, you see, he's telling to us that really at the end of the day, that's where our confidence comes from.

From God himself and from the fact that he is to be respected and revered as we must. It's the beginning of wisdom. As the book of Proverbs put it, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

It's the root of wisdom. And when we are moved by the fear of God, when we live our lives in respect to God, it comes across in how we deal with people.

Because we think of God first and his honor and his good name. And then we treat others in the right way. And having a good conscience.

Now that might trouble some people because sometimes even the Christian, even the best Christian, has a troubled conscience. Still conscious of sin in their lives.

[ 39 : 17 ] Still conscious that they get things wrong. That they speak in the wrong way to people at times. That they regret doing things or saying something. So when he says having a good conscience, he doesn't mean living a perfect life.

But he does mean keeping up a consistent life. And having a good conscience in the sense that even though you know you're not perfect, you know that Christ is.

And that you are in him, as the next verse says. Where he talks there about those in, that you're good behavior in Christ. Christ. That's where your conscience is as well, in Christ.

Because in Christ, God is accepting of you all the time. And you have a good conscience therefore in respect of that. As well as in your behavior, as your good behavior in Christ.

What he's saying? That they may be put to shame. Because that's really the purpose, isn't it? The purpose is not for us to advance our own lives spiritually, though that is of course part of it.

- [ 40 : 25 ] But the purpose he has here, to these Christians who are suffering, are suffering for their faith, they're being challenged in different ways for their faith. The purpose he's saying this to them, and indeed the purpose of their life, is to win people, not to alienate them.

it's to make Jesus attractive as far as possible. And even if you say, well, how is Jesus ever attractive to the world in his worldliness? Well, in that sense, no.

But we have to make him as attractive as he can possibly be through our lives. With meekness, with Christ likeness, with living together in sympathy, brotherly love, unity of mind, tender heart and a humble mind.

With taking the opportunities to present Christ, even in our times of suffering, to let our hope come to be visible as a hope that's in him. And to do it with gentleness and out of the fear of God, with the purpose of winning people through the gospel and winning them to make them disciples of the same Jesus.

That they may be ashamed of their present conduct and turn from it and be saved. Where are we tonight?

- [ 41 : 52 ] Where are you in relation to being in Christ, to knowing Christ, to loving Christ, to serving Christ, to hoping in Christ, to seeking to live a Christ-like life?

If you're not yet in Christ, surely this itself tonight is saying to you, you know, I'm really missing so much in my life. I need to get this right.

And it's time I did it. And if I don't do it tonight, I may not have the opportunity tomorrow. if you're not in Christ, if you're not following Him, if you're not yet saved, please take this to heart.

We want to present this to you humbly, meekly, passionately, zealously, with a genuine concern.

That's what we're about. We're not here to accuse, to condemn, to belittle, any of these things. We are here to be true to our Savior.

- [ 43 : 07 ] And our Savior says, come to me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Let's pray. Lord, our God, we ask that you would bless to us once again your word. Help us to live for you. Forgive us for our lapses, for our failures, for our inconsistencies.

forgive us when we display ourselves rather than our Savior. Forgive us, Lord, for all the sin that you see in our lives, and that others see too. Forgive us for the sin that we see ourselves.

And grant that you would grant to us, Lord, your blessing as a congregation further, that we may indeed advance in unity of mind, in tenderness of heart, in all those characteristics that your word set before us this evening, so that you might be praised through them, and that your holy name be exalted by us.

We ask it all for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now we're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 86, the same song that we began with, and the same version in the Scottish Psalter, this time singing verses 14 to 17.

- [ 44 : 32 ] The tune is Evan, that's on page 341. O God, the proud against me rise, and violent men have set, that for my soul have sought, and thee before them have not set.

But thou art full of pity, Lord, a God most gracious, long-suffering, and in thy truth, and mercy plenteous. These verses 14 to 17 in conclusion.

O God, the proud against me rise, and violent men have met, that for my soul have sought, and me before them have not said.

But thou art full of pity, Lord, a God most gracious, long-suffering, and in my truth, and mercy plenteous.

O turn to me thy countenance, and mercy and mercy all we have, thy servant strength and the son, all thine own hand may save.

[ 46 : 32 ] show me show me a sign for good that they which do me hate may see, and be ashamed because the Lord did help and comfort me.

I'll go to the main door after the benediction. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you now and evermore. Amen.