

Perspectives on the 70s

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Will you turn in your Bibles, please, to Paul's letter to the Ephesian church, the book of Ephesians, chapter 5. And I shall read only verses 11 through 13, words which come in a context in which the Apostle is exhorting the people of God to a life of holiness, holiness understood in its highest sense as the imitation of God (vv. 1-2), holiness which practically speaking means the avoidance of those sins that are contrary to the character of God as revealed in the law of God, and a holiness made difficult by the fact that we not only have indwelling sin, but we must pursue it in the midst of an unholy society. And in that general train of thought, this word comes to the Ephesian Christians and to us: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them; for the things which are done by them in secret it is a shame even to speak of. But all things when they are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for everything that is made manifest is light."

All of us sitting in this building this morning from the youngest to the oldest are creatures of time. We all have a day which is both designated and celebrated as our birthday. All of us live our lives in those little segments of time that we identify with such words as minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years, and now the word that is very much upon everyone's lips and in everyone's mind, decades. Now all of those words are a constant reminder to us that we are indeed creatures of time. And though this is true, there are many times we are not self-consciously aware of that reality. But it is this time of the year when everyone is thinking of the closing down of one calendar year and the ushering in of another that we are made acutely aware of the fact that we are creatures of time. And that awareness is even heightened when we not only pass from one calendar year into another, but when we pass from one decade into another. Now as the people of God, we are not to in any way to think of ourselves as detached from this reality of our being creatures of time. Though we have confidence for that which goes beyond time, even the confidence that we shall be forever with the Lord in the timelessness of eternity, nowhere does the Word of God call upon us as God's children to be insensitive to this matter of time. In fact, in this very passage, the Apostle goes on to say to Christians, "buying up the time" in which he pictures time as a very vital and expensive commodity, a worthwhile commodity which we are to accumulate. We are to be sensitive of the matter of time. And we are to buy up that time in seeking to render acceptable service to our blessed Lord.

Now in the light these things, it is my concern that on this the last Lord's Day of 1979, the last Lord's Day of this decade, we should meditate together on matters related to time and seek to glean perspectives that will help us on the one hand to assess what has gone before and is now being phased out, and to face that which lies before and is ushering in upon us with some degree of Biblical perspective. And so our meditation today could well be called "A Perspective on the 70s and a Prescription for the 80s." And that's why, as I mentioned earlier, we really have one overall

meditation divided into these two segments. This morning, in seeking to gain a perspective on the 70s, I want to direct your attention first of all to what I would call the paramount sins of the 70s. And then we shall consider together the primary reasons for the sins of the 70s, and then finally, the exclusive remedy for the sins of the 70s.

First of all then, the paramount sins of the 70s. Now some may ask, "Why concern ourselves with such a negative matter on the threshold of a new year? Why reflect upon the sins of the 70s?" Well, the text I read in your hearing, among many others, demands that we engage in such an exercise. Notice the language of Ephesians 5:11: "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them." There is the negative admonition. We are not to enter into fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Well, how do we know we are obeying that injunction unless we can identify that which constitutes the unfruitful works of darkness. If we're to obey the injunction to have now fellowship, no delightful sharing and participation with and in the works of darkness, we must have eyes illuminated by the Word and the Spirit to be able to identify what are the works of darkness. And then there is the positive injunction: "but rather reprove them." Our Biblical duty is not fulfilled by a mere withdrawal from the identifiable works of darkness. But the people of God (this is not a word to ministers alone) are called upon to reprove the works of darkness. Well, they cannot engage in that Biblical duty unless they can clearly identify that which is the just and warranted subject of that reproof. And how are we to determine what are the works of darkness. Well, Paul goes on to say, "But all things when they are reproved are made manifest by the light: for everything that is made manifest is light." It is only as the pure light of the Word of God shines upon patterns of human behavior that we can identify them for what they truly are.

Well, having demonstrated, I trust, the legitimacy of beginning our meditation with a consideration of the sins of the 70s, let me just give a word of explanation with reference to what I mean when I speak of the paramount sins of the 70s. Since the fall of man, there has existed in the heart of every man both the potential for every single sin imaginable and a tendency toward that sin. One of the most humbling teachings of the Word of God is summarized in such passages as Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." And without in anyway seeking to minimize that pervasive teaching of Scripture, that there is within the heart of every man, woman, boy, or girl both the potential and the tendency, the capability of every form of wickedness, it is also clear taught in the Word of God that God, by the restraining influence of common grace and the transforming influence of special or saving grace, keeps back much of that potential for evil that is in the human heart. But there are times in the history of men and of nations when because of the limited measure of special grace and the withdrawal of common grace, certain sins that are not only latent or may have found an expression here and there in a given society, not only continue to express themselves as a latent possibility and as an occasional outburst, but they become the very sins which characterize that society. And you cannot think of that society without thinking of those sins.

This is illustrated in such portions as Genesis 6 where we read in verse 5 that God saw that the imagination of the heart of man was only evil continually and then that evil found expression in a peculiar sin. We read in verse 9 that violence filled the earth. And it was that sin of unfettered, aggressive violence which finally precipitated the judgment of the flood. We read in Jude 7 that there was a peculiar sin which characterized the cities of the plain, "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities

about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over to fornication and gone after strange flesh." Now that does not mean that you found no murder, no dishonesty, no blasphemy, no gossip, or any other form of sin in Sodom and Gomorrah prior to the judgment of God. What it does mean is that sexual impurity and, in particular, sexual perversion became the dominant or the paramount sins of that society. This was true, likewise, in New Testament days. The Apostle Paul, writing to Titus, speaks of the Cretans and of what we might call the national sins, paramount sins of the Cretans. Titus 1:12-13a: "One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons. This testimony is true." There were these three sins that predominated in the national life of the Cretans. Now that does not mean, again, that other sins were not manifested or that the tendency was not latent. What it does mean is that these sins became the paramount expressions of the condition of the human heart.

Now it is within that Biblical framework that I address myself this morning to that which I am calling the paramount sins of the 70s. I am not saying that these sins were never present in our national life until the 70s. They were present in our national life from the moment we had any life. Even in our most blessed periods of national righteousness, every one of these sins that I will mention was present. And the potential for them was latent in every human heart. But they did not become the predominating social climate of our nation until the 70s. You see, then, the precise thing to which we are addressing ourselves this morning. What then are those paramount sins of the 70s that have become as much a part of American national life as Baseball, hotdogs, apple pie, and Chevrolets. Well, I confess that it has been no pleasant thing for me to sit hour after hour in past days and to think upon that which constitutes the moral face of my own beloved country. To look at the open sores and the putrefying wounds of the moral state of our nation. And yet as the people of God, we are called upon to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them, to have this prophetic edge to our life and testimony, a duty which we cannot fulfill unless we have some clear consciousness of what constitutes those paramount sins the 70s. And there is no particular significance in the order in which I mention these things.

First of all, this decade of the 70s will go down in any accurate record of its history in American national life as the decade of the tragic reality of abortion on demand. One of the most horrendous decisions that was ever made by the highest court of our land was made in 1973, a decision which has literally turned those theaters of mercy and compassion, our hospital operating rooms and clinics, into mass murder houses. And it has been done with the sanction and the encouragement of the highest court of our land. And it could never have been done at the highest court of the land if it had not been a reflection of the basic moral fiber of the nation itself. The hands of the physicians that have been trained and skilled to administer mercy now throw murdered babies into sterile trash bins to be carried off with the other garbage in the hospital. And I say, if the blood of one creature made in the image of God so moved God that He came to the perpetrator of that crime and said, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground," what must the din be in the ears of the Almighty from the trash bins of our hospitals and clinics across this land? One of the great sins of the 70s is the sin of abortion on demand.

Secondly, the 70s will be recognized by any accurate historian as the decade of pornographic glut. O yes, *Playboy* has been around with some degree of respectability for over twenty years. And under the counter for years, one has been

able to purchase any amount of pornographic filth that his own depraved heart would desire. And mail-order houses have existed where the foulest kinds of movies and pictures could be obtained in order to answer to the foul, base, bestial lusts of men's hearts. But it awaited the 70s to have the glossy-covers of *Playboy* and a dozen other magazines spawned out of the so called sexual revolution staring at us over the counter of the local deli, the local supermarket, and every corner drugstore. It was one thing for wretched depraved men to gather in secret and there to feed the depravity of their hearts upon the carrion of pornographic movies that had been obtained illegally from abroad or by a black market in our own country; it's another thing for someone respectable, middleclass business man to turn aside in his lunch hour to plunk down his few dollars in a respectable place like Willow Brook and there feed his mind upon the very thing that just a few years ago had to be sought out, but is now open and blatant, a running sore in our society. But not only is it confined to the magazines and to the movies, but the TV, t-shirts, bumper stickers. We have nothing less than a pornographic glut as the mark of the sins of the 70s.

Thirdly, it will be known as the decade of total sexual abandonment. O yes, there has always been premarital sex and fornication. There has always been extramarital sex and affairs, but it awaited the 70s to bring it out to the level of respectability so that premarital sex is a way of life among our own present generation. And the college student who even regards virginity as a virtue, let alone who seeks to maintain it, is looked upon as some kind of a historical anachronism, sort of looked upon like someone out of the ice age. Yes, there have always been extramarital affairs. The Bible records them and the tragic fruits of them, but it awaited the 70s to have the sociologists and the Dr. Bothers and the Ann Landers and their ilk to tell us that extramarital affairs are not only tolerable but often provide spice and new life to the marriage relationship. Unashamed vaunting of the sanctity of that inner sanctuary of marriage and saying that the violation of that sanctuary can actually aide and advance the cause of a good marriage. This will be known as the decade of total sexual abandonment.

Fourthly, the 70s must be understood as the decade of homosexual militancy. There have always been homosexuals in our national life. But it awaited the 70s for the homosexual to be so blatant and bold as to march shoulder to shoulder with his fellow perverts and demand not only the laws punishing this vicious wickedness be rescinded, but that laws be enacted to give him full status in the society. It awaited the 70s for homosexuals to appear unshameably on talk shows, television and radios; to appear in popular magazines and openly acknowledge with joy and with a measure of pride that they are perverts. And don't you ever use the word "gay." That's their term. Don't you use it. God calls it perversion. And to the tragic, tragic erosion of our society, this will be known as the decade of homosexual militancy.

Furthermore, the sins of the 70s are to be found in the fact that this will be known as the decade of drug and alcohol obsession. O yes, drugs have always been with us. Alcohol has always been with us. But this has been the decade in which drugs and alcohol have become an obsession and a way of life right across the board in our nation, both legal and illegal drugs, so that you have the housewife who, getting her prescriptions from her own doctor, can only function as she's driven to her tasks as she pops her uppers in the morning and can only get off to sleep as she swallows down her downers at night. And you have the wino who staggers on the skid rows of our cities. And you have the respectable scotch and water business man who sits next to me on the airplanes and belts down three or four before he takes his lunch,

belts down another three or four before he gets off the plane, and belts down a few more before he eats his meal at night. He's utterly addicted to his alcohol. O yes, he's not on skid row. He has his three-piece business suit. He makes his \$40,000 a year and has a fancy title and a lovely home. But he is obsessed and cannot function without his alcohol. And then there is the downright pothead who lives for nothing more than his next buzz or his next high with his joint. And it's a way of life to him, all the way to the respectable weekend user who only gets his five or six on a weekend and consider himself a vital part of society and making a vital contribution, but utterly obsessed. And you have the entire rock culture with music that is out of minds that are disjointed through drugs, that is then paraded by means of an obsession with a whole mentality that is saturated in chemicals. And it's significant that the 70s closed with a bitter memory of that rock group that is the symbol of everything that rock epitomizes. Read the article in *Time* magazine about the rock group Who, not written by Christians, and saying that they are the symbol of the inherent self-destructiveness of the rock music and the rock culture--and eleven people killed, storming the gates of an auditorium. And witnesses said most of them were blown out of their heads with drugs and alcohol. My friends, I am not creating bogie men and setting them before you. These are the characteristics of our national life, the decade of drug and alcohol obsession.

The 70s will be know as the decade of dishonesty and double talk. There was a time in our national life when a man's word was his bond, Christian or non-Christian, whether it was the man down at the corner store and you happen to have no money with you and you took home your groceries and said you'd be by the next day to pay it. I've lived long enough to remember when there was such a day. And your word was your bond, but no longer. And the double talk and the dishonesty perhaps was more clearly epitomized in that whole tragic affair that goes under the title of Watergate. And the highest elected official would look straight into the eyes of millions of fellow Americans and say, "I'm telling you all I know," when he was spinning out a web of lies. And the double talk and the dishonesty is only exemplified by the fact that the very ones who are most blatant in condemning him are guilty of the same doubletalk and the same lies in their political and personal dealings. The 70s are marked as that decade when dishonesty and double talk at every level of national life has become a way of life.

It will be known as the decade of militant feminism. O yes, the so called feminist movement had its roots back earlier than that. I'm very much aware of it. But it has been in the 70s that there has been this obsession to pass the equal rights amendment even to the twisting of our constitution to get an extension of time. "What is constitutional law? We're determined...." What? That women shall receive equal pay for a job they do in equality with men. If that's all it were, I would stand behind it. There's injustice if a woman does not receive the same pay for a job that a man does if the job is worth a certain amount of money. But that's not the issue. The issue is much deeper. Militant feminism asserts that there is no fundamental difference between men and women except a few biological matters. There is no fixed role assigned to the woman by God. There is no fixed structure of authority in male-female relationships. There is no such thing as femininity and masculinity. "All these distinctions are manmade and imposed from without, and we are determined utterly to obliterate them." That's the platform of feminism. And the 70s will be marked as the decade of militant feminism.

Further, the 70s will be marked as the decade of divorce as a way of life in America. Divorce has always been with us. Even the Scripture allows divorce for two reasons. It does not encourage or smile, but recognizes that sin being what it is, there will be circumstances where divorce is the only honorable and righteous course to take in a given set of circumstances, but it never envisions it as a way of life. One just picks up an ordinary newspaper now and there are the ads of the attorneys who for \$200 will help you to dissolve your marriage--just that simple. One cannot stop at a popular book store that carries good literature (I'm not talking about a cheap paperback shelf), and there will be books on how to get your own divorce at a minimum expense to yourself. The absolute dissolving of the sense of the marriage bond and its sacredness.

And then this will be known as the decade of the rejection of the so-called nuclear family, the whole idea that you have a family in which there is a figurehead called the father, who exerts a gracious and righteous and authoritative, loving rule in that home, and a mother who is the epitomizing of all of those virtues spoken of in the Word of God that are attached to motherhood, and children who look to that mother and father for direction and guidance. This will be recognized as the decade that perhaps utterly destroyed the concept of the nuclear family in our national life. Day care centers are far more competent to rear children because they've got the experts whose only job is to manipulate three to five-year olds or seven to nine-year olds. And so the terrible, terrible propaganda goes on.

And finally, this will be known as the decade of decadent religious obsession. And here I wish I could pause to speak longer, but time will not permit it. But we must face the fact that the 70s were marked by a tremendous mushrooming of the cults. Who ever heard of the Moonies before the 70s. They were around, but we didn't hear of them. They weren't accosting us every time we stopped at a red light or walked through an airport. But in the 70s, there was this tremendous advance of the Moonies. And again, the 70s are the decade of Jim Jones and the Guyanese tragedy. 900 people so fanatically obsessed with a human leader that they will send themselves to hell at his command. The decade of yoga, the decade of TM, the decade in which there has been that mushrooming of the mind cults and the oriental religions, the decade of pop religion with no doctrinal substance or moral fiber. Country singers drunk on Friday night, singing "Amazing Grace" on Saturday night while 6000 people stomp their feet and clap their hands and have no sense of shame. Pop religion with no doctrinal substance or moral fiber. We now have locker room chaplains who go in and read a few verses to 35 men on a Sunday and pray with them to salve their conscience while they go out and for three hours profane the Sabbath before 60 or 70,000 and who knows how many millions on the TV. Pop religion with no moral fiber, no doctrinal substance. Bumper sticker Christianity--"Smile, God Loves You," "Honk If You Love Jesus." What is all of this? It is nothing more or less than the terrible blight, the terrible sin of this that I have called decadent religious obsession. "Born Again-ism" where everybody and his uncle whose had any kind of a twitch anywhere in his inner being that has made him feel good in some way related in some form or another to something that has to do with the Bible, he's "born again." Mystical experience. This is the decade of the 700 Club and the PTL movement.

O dear people, it is no pleasant thing for me to speak of these things. But these, I suggest, are the paramount sins of the 70s. Some of you perhaps feel other things should be added. Some of you perhaps feel some should be subtracted. But no one

can deny that the things I've articulated are no longer done in a corner. These things have always been present in our national life. But it has been in the 70s that they have arisen to the prominent features and the very characteristics of our life, so that when a fanatical Muslim by the name of Ayatollah Khomeini says, "We Muslims must rise up and put down your morally decadent Western Christianity," we have no answer. Now, he's wrong in identifying American culture with Christianity. In his Muslim mind, he cannot separate religion from total national life, and we understand that. But no one can say, "You misread our national life. What moral decadence are you speaking about?" We must hold our hands over our mouths and blush and weep. These are the paramount sins of the 70s.

Now I must hurry to touch on this second area of our concern. What is the primary reason for these sins of the 70s? You're aware, I'm sure, that there are some who would say that these things are not sins. They fit the description of Isaiah 5: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" And there are people who would take these ten things I have mentioned and would say, "They're an evidence of advancement and development. We're throwing off the shackles of the old Puritanical mentality that so long bound us in our national life. And they would call all of this evil "good." Well, God has spoken to such people and says, "Woe be unto them!" But now I'm concerned from the Scriptures to ask and answer the question, what is the primary reason for these sins of the 70s? And here's where the Romans 1 passage enters. I am not saying this is the exclusive reason, nor am I saying that this is the only means that has been operative. But I am asserting that this passage contains an answer to the question, what is the primary reason for the sins of the 70s in our national life in America?

Romans 1:18. In this passage, I'll give you a summary statement, then we'll break it down briefly and demonstrate that that summary statement is warranted. What Paul says in Romans 1:18-32 is that God's wrath is revealed right now in giving men over to sin when they willfully reject the knowledge of God given in His revelation to them. Notice, the main assertion (v. 18): "The wrath of God is [being revealed] from heaven...." And all that follows is a commentary upon that fact. What is the wrath of God? How is it revealed? What are the manifestations? What are the causes which provoke it? Those are questions to which the Apostle will address himself. But now the main thesis is, "The wrath of God is [being revealed] from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

Now what's the main cause for that wrath being revealed? And the answer is the rejection of the knowledge of God (v. 21): "Because that, knowing God, they glorified Him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened." Knowing God, they did not glorify Him as God. Verse 25. Look at the language: "for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen." Verse 28: "And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge...." You see the main cause for that wrath being revealed? It is the rejection of the knowledge of God given in His self revelation. In this context, it was the revelation of Himself in creation, nothing more, but it was that. And rejection of that knowledge is the cause of His wrath.

Now then, what is the manifestation of that wrath? Abandonment to the vilest of sins. Verse 24: "Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts...." Notice, the

lusts were already there, but there was measure of common grace restraining the lusts from finding expression in total abandonment. And now as a judgment of God, God removes the barrier; He gives them up to the lusts of their hearts. Verse 26: "For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions [and then the sin of homosexuality is described]." And then verses 28-31--and here the language is frightening:

"God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting [and then this tragic list of social sins]; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful. [All of this being the fruit of what? Being given up by God to a reprobate mind.]"

Do you see, then, primary reason for the sins of the 70s? The primary reason is the wrath of God revealed on our nation for its rejection of the knowledge of God. There is no explanation for this pattern of abounding, aggressive, dominant wickedness but that Almighty God is right now in this last Lord's Day of 1979 revealing His wrath from heaven by doing what? In the language of the text, giving up those in our nation to the lusts of their hearts, giving them up to vile passions, giving them up to a reprobate mind. Now follow, if God did this when men rejected the mere glimmering light of creation, glimmering compared with the full blazing light of the Gospel; if men with just the light of common or general revelation put down that knowledge, refused to act commensurate with it and God is angry and gives them up to these vile sins, what of the nation that was born under the blazing light of the Gospel and visited with mighty outpourings of the Holy Spirit, so that woven into the very fabric of our national life for the first couple hundred years of its existence was the overall moral consciousness of the Word of God governing social life, family life, governing our views of sex, of marriage, of education, of the home; governing the dictums of our courts, what must God's anger be upon a nation that takes that light and says, "We no longer want it," and turns to the darkness of humanism, pagan education, subjectivism, and the deification of man's so-called intellect?

My friend, there is no explanation for the 70s but that Romans 1 is being reenacted before our eyes. And if we are called upon as the people of God to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather to reprove them, we've got to understand what produced these characteristics of the 70s. God has been thrown out of any true consideration in the whole realm of education. In place of an educational framework that operates in the orbit of creation, fall, and redemption, we have for a hundred years had an educational framework soaked in pure humanism, an educational framework which puts evolution in place of the God of creation, which puts humanistic optimism in place of the Biblical doctrine of the fall, and which puts self-help based on self-wisdom in place of redemptive power and light and grace. And God has said, "Alright, you're so smart, you can get on educationally without Me--go ahead." It's no surprise, then, when young people act as though they were animals. They've been told they are animals. They're just being consistent. And God says, "You want to believe you're an animal, then I'll give you up to your animal passions." In terms of our courts, the Word of God and the great principles of justice, the sanctity of human life, the overall moral implications of the unchanging moral law of God expressed in the Ten Commandments are no longer a consideration. That's why our highest court can justify abortion on demand. It has no longer felt the pressure of the Six Commandment. ("Thou shalt do no murder.") That's why divorce

is so cheap and easy. Premarital and extramarital sex--no one is upset. Why? We no longer have the Seventh Commandment exerting its pressure upon our national life and thinking. The tragedy is that in the very church of Christ, voices are raised up saying the Ten Commandments have nothing to say to us. It's bad enough when the world does. But when the church begins to parrot what the world is saying, it's a double tragedy.

Well, this has been very oppressive hasn't it? It's been oppressive to me. I've lived with these thoughts for the last couple of days, and my spirit is very oppressed. But I'm going to close by briefly addressing myself to something that I hope will be a glimmer of light. What is the exclusive remedy for the sins of the 70s? Having contemplated the paramount sins of the 70s, the primary reason for the sins of the 70s, now very briefly and in closing, what is the exclusive remedy for the sins of the 70s? O, stay right there in Romans 1. You see, the Apostle did not introduce the thoughts of verses 18 to 32 in a vacuum. He had just stated his own sense of indebtedness to preach the Gospel (v. 14). Then he has given this wonderful statement of the power of the Gospel. He says, "I have no cause to be ashamed of the Gospel of the grace of God. It is this very Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to the Jew first and also to the Greek." And then he launches into this statement: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven...." Do you see the connection? What he is saying in essence is this: "Against the realistic backdrop of the condition of the pagan Gentile Roman world, a world that is obviously under the wrath of God, having been given up by God to its lusts and passions because of its rejection of the knowledge of God in creation, to such a world, I go with a Gospel that is the power of God unto salvation." And though I have gone into situations where I have seen men ensnared in the very sins described in this passage, I've seen this Gospel break their chains, set them loose and make them Christ's free men. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation." And O my friend, this is the exclusive remedy for the sins of the 70s.

There are all kinds of quack doctors who may to one degree or another admit the malady, but they come with false remedies. My friend, there is but one remedy. It is the Gospel preached in this book of Romans coming to the consciences of men in the power of the Holy Spirit, a Gospel that announces God's right as Creator, Lawgiver, and Judge. And that's exactly what Paul does in the first three and a half chapters of Romans right through chapters 1, 2, 3 to verse 20. And he says, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God." That's the Gospel that is the hope of this generation, a Gospel that announces God is Creator, God is Lawgiver, God is Judge, but then a Gospel that goes on to announce that this same God has sent His only begotten Son to die for sinners. And in the perfection of the obedience of Christ, obedient even unto death, there is a righteousness adequate for all the filth and unrighteousness of these things that are categorized in Romans 1.

You mean there is a righteousness that can cover all of these sins (homosexuality, bestiality, open idolatry, backbiting, insolence, disobedience to parents, covenant breakers)? Yes my friend, that's the Gospel, that in the Lord Jesus Christ, God has provided a righteousness that is adequate to all the demands of His holy law. And that righteousness is to be found only in Jesus Christ. And it is only ours when we come into Christ by faith. So Paul says, "It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." There's nothing here about to everyone who joins himself to

the true church and partakes of the seven sacraments. There is no Romish hocus pocus in this. No, no, it is the Gospel to everyone that believeth, not to everyone who gets a wonderful feeling about Christ. He doesn't know where it comes from or what it's based upon. No, no, it is faith in this objective truth, the announcement God our Maker is our Lawmaker and our Judge.

We've sinned against Him; we stand under His wrath. But that God, wonder of wonders, has sent His Son. And in His Son has perfected a righteousness that is available to everyone who believes. Believes what? All that's revealed about God as your Creator, your Lawgiver, and your Judge, all that's announced about God as the Redeemer of sinners in the Lord Jesus Christ. You're to believe that. You're to embrace Him who is held forth in the Gospel. My friend, that's the exclusive remedy for the sins of the 70s. The remedy is not found in Christians going to Washington and lobbying. The answer is not found in Christian action groups. The answer is found in the mighty power of God the Holy Spirit attending the proclamation of the Gospel and transforming men and women at the citadel of their being, that Gospel proclaimed over the back fence to your neighbors, proclaimed to your loved ones when you enclose a good, solid Gospel tract or booklet, that Gospel proclaimed when you pass on a tape to a friend or associate at work, that Gospel proclaimed formally in pulpits across our land.

And O, as we gather tonight, this will be one of the areas of exhortation and entreaty that we have a renewed confidence in the power of this Gospel. You would think, after Paul wrote what he wrote in that first chapter of Romans, he would have put his pen down and put his tail between his legs and said, "What's the use? If God's wrath is being revealed upon the Gentile world? Why burn myself out, why risked shipwreck and death and imprisonment and beatings and stonings if men are so given over and given up and besotted in their sins?" My friend, that's the very glory of the Gospel. And that's what got hold of Paul. He saw that Gospel come as divine power and liberate sinners. O, may something of the thrill and the glory of it grip our hearts. And as we feel the pain of looking at the 70s and seeing the tragic moral and spiritual declension, those sins that characterize that decade, and recognize the cause and the anger of God, the wrath of God giving up a nation that no longer wants God and His knowledge, how thankful to God we can be if we've been rescued from that. All the potential for every sin in Romans 1:18-32 is in your heart. And O, how grateful we should be if God has laid hold of us in grace, and how filled with hope and earnest desire to see that Gospel come to others should we be.

And O my friend sitting here this morning, some of you whose very lives fit the description at one point or another of the sins of the 70s, you wouldn't know how to get through one week without your booze. You wouldn't know how to get through one week without your drugs of one kind or another. Your life would be utterly shattered. You wouldn't know how to get through one month without some kind of illicit sex, some kind of a high from pornography or infidelity. Your life is a living monument that these are the sins of the 70s. My friend, there's hope for you, but there's hope in only one place, and that's in Jesus Christ as He is offered in the Gospel--that's all. Now that's not flattering. That doesn't make you rise up and say, "O boy, there's something." It strips you; it humbles you. But O, if you will but come in the humility of faith, you will find the blessedness that we read about in our opening Psalm, "Blessed is that people whose God is the Lord [Jehovah Jesus]."