

Our Life Style For The Last Days

By Dr. James O. Davis

All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. If you're not suffering any it's just a plain fact that you are not living godly in Christ Jesus. If you are a child of God you're living in hostile territory. We're twice born people in a world of once born people and we're going to be going against the tide most of the time. What we believe and how we live starts at a different source and is headed toward a different conclusion. Yet, this is not the first time that has ever happened. It happened in the first century Church.

In I Peter chapter 3:13-16, we read "Who is ^[a]there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you ^[b]are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR ^[c]INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, BUT ^[d]sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a ^[e]defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and ^[f]reverence; ^[g]and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame."

In Peter's day there were those who were opposing, the saints of God. They accused them of all manner of things. They accused them, for example, of subversion against the government because they would not say that Caesar is Lord. They said that Jesus Christ is Lord. They accused them of being economic threat because they preached against idolatry. Idolatry in that day was not only a source of religion, or a subject of religion, it was a great source of income. Also, they condemned their lifestyles. The lifestyles of the Christians accused and condemned the pagans because Christians lived a different lifestyle. The comparison of Christians is that they rebuked the immorality of that day.

Peter challenges us with "**A Lifestyle for the Last Days.**" We are living in era that is very similar to the days of the Nazis in Germany. Martin Niemoller was a pastor in Germany. Martin Niemoller, stood up against Hitler and he was put in prison. Later, he was put in a concentration camp. After the war he was released, but he went around talking about how he failed to stand up and speak up when he could have and should have in his generation. Pastor Niemoller said, "At first they came for the socialists and I did not speak up because I was not a socialist. And then they came for the trade unionists. But I did not speak up because I was not a trade unionist." Then he said, "Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak up because I was not a Jew." Then he said, "Then they came for me and by that time there was nobody left to speak up for anybody."

We still have some freedoms today. We still have a time to speak. We still have a time to let our voice be known. But before long, there may not be anybody to speak up for us if we don't speak up for ourselves and speak up for others.

Peter says we have to be **real** and we have to be **ready**. He says, for example, "who is he that will harm you if you be followers of that which is good?" The word "followers" is the word we get "zealot." It means if you are zealous for that which is good. Not just a Sunday morning bench warmer, not a ho-hum Christian, not a casual Christian, but somebody who is on fire for the Lord Jesus Christ with a burning, blazing passionately, emotional love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Are you zealous? Are you zealous for the Lord Jesus Christ? We must not only be real, but we must be ready. In verse 15, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you of the reason of the hope that's in you."

When was the last time anybody ever asked you about your faith? When is the last time anybody looked at you and said, "How are you wired? What makes you tick? How is it that you can live the lifestyle that you live?

There was a philosopher whose name was Niche. Niche lived in the time of Hitler and was a student of Darwin. He was anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Bible. He used to ridicule Christians. And here's what he said to Christians. He said, "If you want me to believe in your Redeemer, you're going to have to look a little more Redeemed." Do you look redeemed? Has anybody ever said to you, "What is the reason for your hope?

Now, remember that in that day there was persecution. In the day in which we live there will be persecution. What's the persecution going to be? They're going to call you intolerant. If you say there is one way to heaven, there's a fixed standard of right and wrong, you will be intolerant in this day. And the one sin this world will not tolerate with their vindictiveness against intolerance is our belief that there is but one way to heaven and His name is Jesus. We will be called a part of the religious right. As if there is a religious left and a religious right. The answer is not right or left. The answer is right or wrong. And if we stand up for that which is right we're going to be called bigoted. We're going to be called fundamentalists. We're going to be called narrow minded.

First, the lifestyle for the last days, **Includes A Settled Lordship**. In 1 Peter 3:15, he states, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts...". We cannot allow anything or anyone to stand in your way of your loyalty to Jesus Christ. What does the word "sanctify" mean? It means to "set Him apart." How do you set Him apart? As Lord, you don't mix Him in with anything else. He is sanctified, set apart as Lord.

Let's just imagine this scene. The wedding is over, the cake has been cut. The guests have gone. The new couple get in their automobile and they drive off. And she says to him as she moves over to her side of the car away from him, "John, take me home." He says, "Now

darling, you know we can't go home. Our house won't be finished for three weeks, we're going on our honeymoon.

He said, "No, no, no, no." She says, "no, no, no, no. Take me to my mother's home, back where I was. Now John, I want you to understand that I accepted you as my husband. I'm grateful for your love for me. But I want you to take me back to my home, back to my own, old lifestyle. Now John, if I need you, if I have some difficulty I will call on you. I will try to visit with you at least once a week. I expect you to take care of my needs. But John, I have given you my life in the fact that I took you as my husband. But don't expect me to change my lifestyle."

A lot of people have done that exactly to Jesus. They say, "I've accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior. And if I get in trouble, if I get in difficulty, I'll call upon Him. And if the weather's good and I'm feeling right, I just may come to church, to His house and visit Him." Don't you think that it is time for all of us, those of us who named the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to sanctify Him as Lord? He is Lord! He's absolute Lord.

Secondly, the lifestyle of the last days **Instructs A Solid Logic**. In 1 Peter 3:15, we read, "But Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and reverence."

The pagans have some good questions, but we've got better answers. The word "answer" in the context of "to give an answer" is the word we get our word "apologetics" from. You know what apologetics is? In theology apologetics is a reason, a defense of our faith. We don't have to check your brains at the door when we become Christians.

There are so many Christians who ought to be ashamed of the weakness and shallowness of their faith. You ask the average Christian, "What do you believe?" and he or she begins to stutter and stammer. Somebody asked a lady one time, "What do you believe?" She said, "I believe what my church believes." "What does your church believe?" "The church believes what I believe." "What do you and your church believe?" "We both believe the same thing!"

For some of us, if we were to come up to automobile accident and a man was dying, pumping his life's blood out on the asphalt and he was to say to us, "Are you saved?" We would say, yes, I'm a Christian. I'm a member of a great church. I have an amazing pastor." "Well, I'm dying. Will you tell me how to be saved, how to get to heaven." Some of us would say, "Don't die yet. I'll run get my pastor." So many Christians do not know how to share their faith with the lost. They are not ready to give an answer of the hope that is in them.

Now we need to sharpen up on our faith. We need some articulate people who will speak up on the job, speak up in society, speak up in politics, speak up in the city schools, speak up for the Lord Jesus Christ and do it reasonably with a solid logic.

Now this doesn't mean that we are to argue with unreasonable people. As a matter of fact, the Bible warns against this. In Proverbs 26: 4, we read, "Answer not a fool according to his folly." I

have people trying to draw me in all kinds of arguments all the time. But you know, if you wrestle with a pig, you'll get dirty. The pig doesn't care. When you argue with a fool, somebody standing around can't tell who's who. The Bible makes that very clear. Jesus said in Matthew 7:6, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you." So we're not going to argue with foolish people about our faith.

Thirdly, our lifestyle for the last days **Inspires A Superior Lifestyle**. In 1 Peter 3:15, "But sanctify the Lord God in your heart and be ready always to give an answer to every man that ask you of a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and reverence." Why would anybody ask you about your faith? Because of your lifestyle is superior to the average person. The Apostle Peter states, "the hope that is in you with meekness and reverence." Do you know what meekness is? It is strength under control. The Roman army was called meek. Moses in the Bible was called the meekest man that ever lived. He certainly wasn't weak. Jesus said, I am meek and lowly. He means strength under control. When people see us with lives under control in a chaotic age they know that there is a difference.

It is tragic when this world does not see many Christians with meekness and reverence. As a result of this, they think of us as being hate mongers, filled with arrogance.

Peter is writing at a time when Nero was Emperor. They took Christians; poured oil on them; poured hot tar on them; nailed them to crosses and set them on fire and used them to light their gardens. Do you know what it was that turned the Roman empire upside down and caused the gospel of Jesus Christ to spread? It was the ability of Christians to suffer righteously, not timidly, not fearlessly, but righteously as the Lord Jesus Christ had given them as an example.

We need to out live, out give, out study, out pray, out preach, out sacrifice the pagans. When they look at us, they need to see somebody who is different. A Christian ought to stand out like a Gardenia in a garbage can. When we live that way, people are going to be able to ask us, what makes you so different from the rest of the world?

Fourthly, the lifestyle of the last days, **Illustrates Steadfast Love**. In 1 Peter 4:8, we read, "And above all things have love on fire among yourselves: for charity, love, shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging."

We not only need love for one another, but love for the lost. Are we against abortion? Yes, we're against abortion. Yet, we need to show love for those who have participated in abortion. What are we going to do to help young pregnant women who yes, through their own sin, in most instances, have gotten pregnant and seek an abortion? Do we wrap our robes of self-righteousness about us, look down on them and drive them into the very arms of the abortionist?

We believe in the permanency of marriage. We're not going to lower the standard. God's plan is one man for one woman till death do them part. What about the people who are divorced?

There are millions and millions and millions of people who are divorced. Are we just going to say, "You go to hell?" We are a good church. We don't believe in divorce. You're not welcomed here." No. They need our love. They're bruised and broken and hurt. We can be like a bunch of self-righteous Pharisees and drive them not only away from our presence and keep them coming from the Lord Jesus Christ.

What about those who are in the homosexual lifestyle? Will we say that you can't come to our church if you believe in homosexuality or you practice homosexuality? They need Jesus. They need to be saved. They're not going to be saved by our self righteousness. How are we going to reach this world? How are we going to reach our city? The only one way that we're going to do it is to sanctify the Lord in our heart and always be ready to give an answer of the hope that is within us.

Fifthly, the lifestyle of the last days **Involves A Satisfied Longing**. In 1 Peter 3:15 we read, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer that ask you of a reason of the hope that is in you." Hope is a longing that is satisfied. Hope means more than certainty. It means something you long for, something you desire. It is faith transformed into reality in your hope, in your heart and in your life.

If we're going around without hope, without a steadfast hope; then we have failed to show the greatest thing that this world needs. This world is wondering, is there hope? Is there an answer? There is an answer. His name is Jesus! The Bible is true! The Holy Spirit is real! There is an hope in Christ. God is moving in a mighty way in our world. We may look sometimes at a pagan society and we may say, well, it's all over. These are the greatest days of evangelism in the history of the Christian church.

The late, Dr. James D. Kennedy, who is the progenitor of Evangelism Explosion, said, "We are in the midst of the greatest gathering into the kingdom in the history of the world. In the year 100 A.D. there was estimated about 100 converts a day. By the year 1900 it had risen to 943 converts a day in the world. By 1950, uh, there were 4,500 a day. By 1980, 20,000 a day. By 1995, 100,000 souls a day coming to Christ. Today, 200,000 souls a day and growing, coming to Jesus Christ." The greatest days of evangelism are right now.