

The Christian Life in Biblical Perspective
7 Essentials Of the Christian Life
The Essential Lifemarks of the Effective Christian Life
I John 5:1-5
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September 27, 2009 – Morning Sermon

We are going to look at a couple of Scriptures for this study so have your Bibles ready. While you are turning to 1 John 5 may I take this opportunity to invite you to spend a wonderful way to end the Lord's Day in worship and praise to God? In the evening service we are in the study of Daniel and we are still in Daniel 1. We have one more study on Daniel 1 because you cannot understand the other 11 chapters without understanding Daniel 1. It's absolutely crucial so we'll be taking our last look at Daniel 1 tonight setting up the rest of our study of the book of Daniel. This of course is the key chapter to all that God is going to reveal to Daniel and all that He is going to do through Daniel – the memoirs and messages of Daniel.

Look with me now in God's Word. This is the Word of God. It's the Truth. 1 John 5:1-5 says, *1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. 4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

The grass withers and the flower fades. God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

The title of our series is Seven Essentials of the Effective Christian life. I have chosen the word effective but if the Apostle Paul were here that would not be the word he would have used. Paul would use the word of a spiritual Christian. When Paul looked at believers he basically said, "There are new believers that are still encumbered with the worldly thinking" in which he called them 'babes in Christ' or 'fleshly.' Then he said, "Who are the mature? They are spiritual. These are the ones who stay the course, minister faithfully and by God's grace lay hold of their marriage and family and are lights of Christ, ambassadors for Christ and witnesses for Christ. These are spiritual." After reading the text above you already have a taste of what John would say. John would not use the word effective either. He would call you overcomers.

One of my spiritual fathers early on was an elder by the name of Harold Jones but he is now with the Lord. He always had little ways of saying things. One time I said to him, "How are you doing Harold?" He said, "Great. How are you doing Harry?" I said, "I'm doing good. I'm doing well. God's good." He looked at me and said, "Well, can you tell me when He's not?" I thought well now I'm going to have to rearrange my conversation. Another time he came up to me and said, "How are you doing Harry?" I said, "Pretty good under the circumstances." He said, "Well what are you doing under there?"

More than conquerors – *hupernikao* (Greek) is what Paul calls it. John uses overcomers. He says, "If you've been born again you are an overcomer of the world. By

God's grace through faith in Christ you are an overcomer." Your marriage does not destroy your witness. The witness of Christ takes hold of your marriage. The family does not destroy and despair and discourage you. By God's grace He raises you to the challenge. He doesn't say life is without challenges, or you're not going to fall down but he says ultimately the believer is an overcomer by God's grace. And it's not that you overcome to be saved. We are saved by the One who had overcome sin, death, hell and the grave. Christ has overcome and we won the victory. Now, those who know Christ, as they mature, become overcomers.

So what are the essentials of an overcomer? We have looked at two so far. The first essential of an effective Christian life, the overcomer as John would say, is someone who understands their life purpose. Why did God make you? Why did God save you? Why does God sustain you? Why do you and I exist? Our forefathers have gone ahead of us and put it in a little instrument to teach us basic Christian doctrine which is called the Westminster Shorter Catechism. The first question is what is the life purpose of men? Why does God save men and women? The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. So here is how we articulate the first essential. The first essential is the effective Christian life is a worship life in which the glory of God is our consuming desire and the joy of the Lord is our fulfilling passion. What is it that God has called us to be? God made us, saved us and sustained us to the praise of the glory of His grace and He did much to save us.

Now here's the problem. You have to stay focused. One man said it this way, "You have to fight for that life purpose." The reason for this is we have a world out here that doesn't want you to make life worship to God. They want you to make yourself the object of worship. So when the Apostle Paul develops this in the book of Romans he says you have a life purpose but he says it this way in Romans 12:1; "*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*" Then he says you'll have to fight for this. He didn't quite say it like that but that's what he meant. He said you'll have to fight this because you have the world out here that wants to keep making it all about yourself and then you have that old man in which you live for yourself and that remnant of that old man is still within you. So that old man in you and the world outside of you wants you to keep saying, "Life is all about me" and sadly we will even pervert the Gospel into making it all about us. It's a very easy step to do, isn't it?

To get me saved, what did God have to do? He had to send His Son. God had to do much to get me saved. He had to give His Son. An easy thing to do is to think; God had to do much to get me saved so when God saved me obviously He is making much of me. Yet I don't think that's quite accurate. God has done much to save me, not so much to make much of me, but so that I've been set free to make much of Him. I have to keep fighting for that so Paul says this in the next verse in Romans 12:2; "*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed (fight) by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*" You have to keep instructing your life constantly. It's not about me. It's about the glory of God. God has done much to save me that I might make much of my Savior. I want to glorify God and enjoy Him forever and the more I glorify Him the more I enjoy Him and the more I enjoy Him the more I glorify Him and by God's grace that is my life

purpose. That's what transforms everything in life. God make this a statement of praise to Your glory that the world would see the glory of Your grace work within me.

The life purpose though can only be lived with life lines so we went to a second essential. The second essential is the two life lines that allow us to live the life purpose and that is the effective Christian life is absolutely, completely dependent upon the two life lines of daily and regularly profiting from the Word of God while simultaneously relying upon the Spirit of God. We are to daily and regularly profit from the Word of God while we rely continually on the Spirit of God. We looked at the Bereans for this one. The Bereans were noble-minded because it said they received the preaching of the Word with eagerness. It was a priority in their life and they examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. They were regularly in the Word personally while with a teachable Spirit came under the preaching of the Word as a priority. So they prioritized the preaching and teaching of the Word and then they were regularly in the Word. They were attached to the life line of the Word of God by meditating on it, memorizing it, hearing it, working their way through it and thinking their way through it. What is God saying? What is the truth of God's Word declaring to me?

Then to understand it and live it they realized that they had to put no confidence in the flesh for it is the Spirit who gives life. So they regularly surrendered to the work of the Holy Spirit in their life. So it's the Holy Spirit who is giving them the ability to understand the Word and to live the Word so that they are attached to it and the two are working together. The Word brings me to the Spirit of God and the Spirit of God is the only One who can ultimately help me understand the Word of God. So they are regularly in the Word of God. Now I have the life purpose and I have the life line.

Here is the third essential which we will look at in this study which are the life marks. What are the marks of a man or woman who by God's grace has been saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone and their life purpose is this desire to glorify God and this fulfilling passion to enjoy Him forever, they are attached to the Word of God, and they are dependent upon the Spirit of God? So what marks are upon their life when God's Word and God's Spirit is working in their life? I want to make four comments about the text in 1 John 5.

The first thing that this text tells you is to be saved you must come to Christ as Lord and Savior by faith. 1 John 5:1, 4, 5 says, *1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God...4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* So here I am Harry Reeder, I am lost and I can't save myself. I need a Savior because I can't save myself. I need someone to intervene for me. Praise God I have heard the Good News – Jesus has come into this world to save sinners and I'm one of them. God has allowed me to see that so that I put my faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

The second thing the text tells you is to come to Christ you must be born again. 1 John 5:1 says, *“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God...”* In other words, if someone believes in Jesus as the Christ the only way they were able to do that is that they have been born again. 1 John 5:4 says, *“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.”* So I must be born again. To be saved I must believe in Jesus. To believe in Jesus I must be born again. I am dead in my sins and I must be born again.

The third thing the text tells us is the one who comes to Christ will love what He loves. If you're born again and you come to Christ you will love what He loves. 1 John 5:1 says, *"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him."* That is if God's love has taken hold of me then my love is not only to God but I will love all that He loves. That which is born of Him, that which is begotten of Him, I will love. That's a mark that is there.

The fourth thing is that those who love what He loves will love the Truth and love His people. 1 John 5:2, 3 says, *2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.* God's Word, His authority in our life, His rule for what I believe and what I am to practice is right there. God's Word is before me and I want to embrace it therefore if to be saved I must believe in Jesus. To believe in Jesus I must be born again. If I'm born again, I'll love. If I love, I'll love the Truth. The Truth and love mark out those who have been born again and set on the path to be overcomers by His grace. Those are the two marks – Truth and love.

Stop and think with me just for a moment. John is merely repeating what he recorded in the Gospels where Jesus said, "Do you want to know who My disciples are? They keep My commandments. By this you shall know they are My disciples that they love one another." Jesus already said this. John is by the Holy Spirit reconstructing what Jesus has already said. Jesus said, "Do you want to know who loves Me? They love the Truth and seek to obey it. Do you want to know who loves Me? They love one another. Those who are followers of Me love the Truth and they love one another." John has just put it together in a different form and fashion that we have just worked our way through. Now, if to love, and love of the Truth are the life marks of those who are feeding upon the life lines then it stands to reason that the Bible would inform us that the life lines which are the Word and the Spirit, would bring you to Truth and love. In other words if I am regularly reading and hearing God's Word then that ought to bring me to love of the Truth and love of love. And if I am surrendered to the Holy Spirit then the Holy Spirit would bring me to Truth and love. So if Truth and love are the marks of life then the life lines would bring me to Truth and love. Now, let's see if the Bible teaches that.

Let's look at John 17. So what's the first lifeline? It's the Word of God. So I am reading the Word. I am prioritizing the preaching of the Word in my life. It is at work in my life. John 17 is the High Priestly prayer. Before we look at this, someone said to me one time, "With all this technology you can put the Scriptures upon the screen and we don't have to turn to it. You seem to have a time problem anyway. We could save time." The reason why I don't do that has to do with my third-grade schoolteacher. That's who you need to blame. I believe if we don't look at Scripture eventually you won't be able to find your Bible and here's the other thing I learned. My third-grade schoolteacher loved to give words that we didn't know and it wasn't hard when I was eight years old. She would give a word that you didn't know and then she would say, "Do you know what this word means?" We would say, "No, tell us." She would say, "No, look it up. If I tell you you'll probably forget. Harry, in particular you will forget but if you look it up even you, Harry, they remember it after a while." I really believe handling it is one of the reasons why we need to do this. So take your Bible and go with me to John 17 and look at it. Maybe we can remember this.

John 17:17 says, “*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.*” That is grow your people, set them apart in the Truth. What's Truth? Your Word is Truth. So if I am attached to the lifeline of God's Word, what is God's Word? It's Truth. It's not a collection of truths. It's not a collection of truths and opinions. It's Truth. Singular, total, complete true Truth is what God's Word is. So if I am attached to God's Word what would mark out my life? It would be Truth. If I am attached to God's Spirit will Truth mark out my life? Let's find out. Go to John 15. This is the passage that tells you that the Holy Spirit will be given to. John 15:26, 27 says, **26** “*But when the Helper (Holy Spirit) comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.*” So how do you know the Holy Spirit is there? It is because Jesus is being exalted and that's what He came to do. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth in this text. So if I am attached to the lifeline of the Word, what will mark me out? Sanctify them in the Truth, thy Word is Truth. If I am attached to the lifeline of the Holy Spirit, what will mark me out? He is the Spirit of Truth.

Now, what was the second lifeline? Not only are we attached to the Word but we are attached to the Truth and now would Word and Truth lead to love? We have already seen that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and that the Word is Truth, therefore the mark of Truth would be there but the second mark that John says will be there is love. Will the Word of God lead us to love? Let's look at 1 Timothy 1. Here, Paul sent Timothy back to Ephesus because he had warned them that when he left false teachers would come. False teachers came to Ephesus. When Paul got out of prison he heard that the church was in trouble so he sent back Timothy. When he sends Timothy there what does he say? 1 Timothy 1:3, 4 says, **3** *As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, 4 nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.* So, false teachers were teaching wrong things here.

What happens if you fulfilled God's charge to teach Truth? It is to teach His Word rightly. Now look at the next verse in 1 Timothy 1. 1 Timothy 1:5 says, “*The aim (the goal) of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*” If God's Word is taught rightly, what will mark out those who receive it? It is love from a sincere faith, a good conscience and a pure heart. God's Word makes lovers of God and lovers of others. God's Word brings the mark of love.

What about the Holy Spirit? Will the Holy Spirit bring love? If the Holy Spirit is within you He'll bear fruit. What is the fruit of the Spirit? It is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control so stop with me right here. I want to try to make this as clear as I possibly can. My purpose is to glorify and enjoy God forever. The lifelines that I have in Christ are the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The Word of God with rightly read, studied, preached, taught and heard will bring Truth. Sanctify them in the Truth, thy Word is Truth. The Word of God when properly taught will bring love. The aim of our teaching is love from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith. And if I am attached to the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit will lead me to Truth because He is the Spirit of Truth. The Holy Spirit will produce love that will be manifested with joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Those two marks are the consistent, right use of the Word and the Spirit. They both bring us to love and to Truth.

I want to share with you one other thing from 1 Peter 1. Watch how Peter along with Paul, along with John and obviously from Jesus Himself, how these two are married together for those who are born-again. 1 Peter 1:22, 23 says, *22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.* So if I am born again, what does he say will be seen in the lives of those who have been born again? They are purified through their obedience to the Truth and they love one another. In other words, God's Truth brings them to love. God's Word brings them to love. God's Spirit brings them to Truth. Truth and love are at work in their life. The two are married together. Paul puts it this way; "speaking the truth in love." It literally means, "truthing in love" or as one man said, "as believers we're truthing in love and were loving in truth."

In other words, these two marks are inseparably tied together. As glorifying God and enjoying Him forever are put together God is worship when I glorify Him and enjoy Him. The more I glorify God the more I enjoy Him. The more I enjoy Him the more I glorify Him. How does that happen? It happens through the lifelines and the Word and the Spirit are not separate. They work together in my life. When they worked together in my life they both produce in my life Truth and love. Truth and love are to work together, not separate from one another. You love with the Truth and you Truth with love that both of them are at work in our life together.

Sometimes believers and churches will separate them. They say, "We're a truth church" and they take the Bible and beat people to death with it. Here, you don't sense any sense of love. Then there are those who say, "We just love the Lord and we love people so if this little piece of the Bible or this truth bothers you we'll just get rid of it." So in the name of love they sacrifice truth and in the name of truth they sacrifice love. So is it 100% love and 0% truth? No. Is it 100% truth and 0% love? No. Is it 50% truth and 50% love? No. It's 100% Truth and 100% love? So how in the world do you do 200%? You have to ask the Holy Spirit for that one. I have no formula for it but the Holy Spirit is the One who helps you speak the Truth in love and He's the One that helps you love with the Truth and the two are inseparably tied together.

True Christians do love and obey Truth. As soon as I have said that I have just confronted something. I am confronting our notion that love is a sentiment. I am 61 years old and I am getting so sentimental that I can't handle it but love is not sentiment. Love is an action that is sacrificially given for the benefit of someone else. God loved you. Was that a sentimental view and attachment of you? God so loved the world that He **gave** His Son. He did love. In Romans 5 it says, God demonstrated His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. I had the great privilege to preach this with no axe to grind. I know that none of us are perfect in this but I am amazed at your love. I love the fact that you love the Truth. I love seeing this in your congregational communities, your small groups and your families but I do know that Satan is always working.

So when you get into the family it's not, "all right wife you're going to hear the truth on this one." No, we're going to love with Truth our wife. We're going to Truth with love our husband and you'll see it because when truth and love mark you out you don't

immediately go to the other person because truth first lands in my own heart. So what it shows up with is not confrontation but confession. You'll say, "Honey I have to tell you the truth about me." That's confession. When God allows our spouse to see the truth and come, readily we forgive. Harry, do you know what he or she did? No I don't but I do know that if you have been forgiven much you're going to be a much forgiver. (I know that wasn't good grammar.) You will be ready to forgive much if you have been forgiven much. If you're not ready to forgive than you need to do some checking. You need to look in your life and you'll probably find some arrogance and self-righteousness there which is probably what is at work in your life.

In our life should be a readiness to put truth and love together and each other's lives. Love is what we do as Christians. Truth is what we obey as Christians. It's one thing for me to say the Bible is true and then when the Bible talks to me about stewardship or tithing now I find out whether I really think it's true or not. When the Bible tells me to confess my sins to one another now we find out, do I really believe its true, am I ready to confess? Am I ready to do that which God has commanded? Now you see my true view of His Word. Truth is there to be obeyed. It's not just that we're a church that believes the Bible as a symbol. No, the Word is Truth and if we are marked out by Truth it is seen as the marks being obedience and therefore, I ask you Lord Jesus, by Your Holy Spirit to give me a love that is unconquerable. Jesus, please give me a commitment to Truth that is unstoppable. I want Truth and love to reign in my life that Jesus Christ will be seen and I want it to be seen in my marriage.

My burden is here for our marriages in particular that you will fight for that marriage with Truth and love. You will bring all the weapons of the Spirit of God and the Word of God to bear upon our marriage, our relationships because here is that essential number three. The essential life marks of the effective Christian are Truth that's obeyed and love that is manifested. We do love and we obey Truth. What does that look like? Very briefly, I want to give you three takeaways.

What does it mean to be transformed by Truth? The first one is one simple thing. If God's Word has brought us to Truth and Truth is transforming us then the Truth, sound doctrine, will become the center of our life and the circumference of our life. It will become the foundation of our life and the framework of our life and you will be set free. They shall know the Truth and the Truth shall set them free (John 8:32). Harry, you just said that Truth is the core and the *circumference*? You mean I can't go outside of it? No. That doesn't sound very free to me. Harry, you just said that Truth is the foundation and the framework of my life. I can't get outside the framework? No. It's the anchor. It's the core. It's the center. It's the foundation. It's the framework. It's the circumference. Harry, that just doesn't sound very free to me. That's the old man talking.

Let's say I go out here and find this big old railroad engine. I say, "That poor old engine can only go from Birmingham to Sylacauga everyday. I am going to set that engine free." I get gigantic cranes to pick the engine up off of the tracks and we put it on Highway 280 at an intersection and we tell it to go where it wants to. Where is it going to go? Don't think too deeply on this. It will go nowhere because it wasn't made to be on Highway 280. It is only free as long as it is on the tracks.

I have a grandson and his name is Matthias. I would love to tell you about them and there are a number of things I could tell you about him. He spends time with us. Our backyard is 15 yards or 45 feet and then there is a 1400 foot drop. So we tell Matthias to

go play in the backyard and what do you think comes next from Papaw but most of the time Grandma? "Not far!" How much of that 45 feet do you think Matthias gets to play in? If I'm around he gets to play in about 15 feet of it but if grandma is around it's more like 10 feet. That's it. What if we put a fence up at the 45 foot mark? Now how much does he get? He gets 45 feet. That's what God's Word does for us. He lets you have the fullness of all that He made and saved you to be and do but He says, "Don't climb the fence. There's a drop in to death. If you want sex enjoy it within the fence meaning within marriage. If you go over the fence there will be death." Idolatry? Death. The joy of the Lord? Life. Your family for the Lord? Life. Your family in place of the Lord? Death. Here is the foundation and here is the framework. The Truth marks us out. It transforms us.

The second takeaway is what does it mean for compelling love of Christ? I want to look at one other passage and we will close with this. We are going to look at 2 Corinthians 5. I love this chapter because of verse 17 which talks about us being a new creation and verse 21 but there is another great verse in this chapter that I want you to see. 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15 says, **14** *For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.* The compelling love of Christ is what marks out the believer. There is the Truth that transforms - foundation, framework, core, circumference and love that compels us.

What kind of love? It is the love of Christ. Do you know why we don't worship like we ought to? Very seldom is it because somebody failed us in a hymn selection or we are not manipulated enough by a performer in front of us. It is because the love of Christ has not taken hold of our soul that we might sing "love divine, all loves excelling." Do you know why we don't evangelize? It's not so much that we don't love lost people although that may be part of it. It is because we don't love Jesus. If we love Jesus we are going to love what He loves. He loves the lost. It is the love of Christ that compels us to love one another, to love the lost, to love His Word, to love His church, to love those things that He loves. It compels us. It constrains us. It controls us.

Here is the third and last takeaway. There is a mark of the marks. So what is the mark of the marks? If Truth marks me ultimately Truth is all about Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" and the love of Christ compels me. When these marks are in our life what people begin to talk about all around us when they look at us is Jesus. For if I love and I have the Truth in my life, fed by the Spirit and the Word, to glorify and enjoy Him forever then Christ is sovereign, supreme and sufficient and what they see and hear down to my last word is Jesus. He is my life and He is my all. Christ is the Truth. The sovereign, supremacy and sufficiency of Christ is the mark of the marks. It is not love that is mere sentimentality but it is acted out for Christ, the love of Christ. It is Truth that is not merely symbolically acknowledged but obeyed and embraced in all of life.

His name was Thomas Bilney and he is the one I want to finish with in this study. You may not know much about him. You've heard about William Tyndale who gave his life so you could have the Bible, right? He loved and he loved Truth so you were able to have the Bible. When that Bible was published there was a man by the name of Thomas Bilney that got as many copies as he could and in contradiction to the law and the threats

of the authorities, he went all through London preaching the Bible and giving away Bibles. In the suburbs of London one day he stood and said, "I love you in Christ and here's the Truth that Christ loves you." Love and truth and as he preached and gave out the Bibles they arrested him. Two weeks later they chained him to a post and put the embers under him. They lit the fire and those who witnessed it said this, "As he burned his eyes opened with compassion for those who looked and his captors, love." This man who loved love and Truth as the flames leapt up around him his last words were, "oh Jesus, I believe."

There are some that will tell you a mature Christian is someone who gets a second blessing. Some will say that a mature Christian speaks in a tongue. Others say a mature Christian is someone who knows a word of faith, who can confess it and profess it and they can believe it and receive it. I tell you from the Word of God you will know the mature Christian because they love to obey the Truth and they love to love and Christ is exalted. Jesus I believe. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for this time we could be together. Thank You for Your Word and the ground work You lay in each of our lives. Father, I want to pray and ask for anyone who is reading this that has never yet made that commitment to Christ and perhaps they are seeking today, please hear this today. The answer is not in ritual or religion. The answer is in a Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Come to Him today. Then Father, for those who know You as Savior, may we grow having our souls purified by the Truth we obey and may our lives manifest that Truth in our love for all that You love and our love for one another. I pray this in Jesus' Name that the marks of the Redeemer will be upon our life – Truth and love, Amen.