



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Last Step on the Way Down- Part 1

Guest(s): Adrian Rogers

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson with Family Talk, which is a division of the James Dobson Family Institute, and I greet you today in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I want you to hear a recorded message today that features the late Dr. Adrian Rogers, who was like a brother to me. He was senior pastor at Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee for 33 years. And during that time, the church grew from 9,000 members to 29,000. It was a very successful church that was deeply loved by the people who live in that city.

His Sunday sermons were videotaped during that time right to the end, and became an international outreach called Love Worth Finding, and that's still being telecast every week on Daystar. Adrian went to be with the Lord in 2005, and I miss him today. We also love his wife, Joyce, and their children and grandchildren. Now, the reason I wanted you to hear this particular Love Worth Finding message is because Shirley and I just watched it on Daystar, that was just a few weeks ago. Maybe you saw it too. But we were amazed at how relevant Adrian's sermon was and how much it relates to this day. So we'll talk about that at the end of the program, but here now is one of the great preachers of his time and our time, Dr. Adrian Rogers.

Adrian Rogers: We find in Romans Chapter 1, we're in a series of Bible studies on the Book of Romans, entitled "Foundations for Our Faith." And these are shaky days in which we live and you need to find something solid to stand on and the Book of Romans is something solid to stand on.

Now, may I say this? That the Book of Romans literally is good news. It is about the Gospel. The theme is the Gospel and the word Gospel means good news, but ladies and gentlemen listen to me. Before you will appreciate good news, you've got to hear bad news. Now that's just the way it is. It's the bad news that makes the good news good. And so as the apostle Paul begins the Book of Romans, he tells us first of all about sin before he tells us about salvation and sanctification and service. And so we're in that part now that talks about sin and Paul is talking about the terrible, horrible consequences of sin and the causes of sin in the hearts and lives of people.

Now, this nation needs to hear the Book of Romans because folks, most Americans are egomaniacs, peacocks, strutting to hell thinking they're too good to be damned. And I've learned in preaching that if you want to get people saved, first of all, you have to get them lost. Now they are lost, but you have to get them to understand that they need the Gospel. Now with that in mind, and last week we talked about the bad news that makes the good news good, we're just going to continue that. And the title of the message today is "The Last Step on the Way Down."

Now Paul is talking about what has happened to humanity when they turn from God. Begin reading in verse 24, it says, and these are perhaps some of the most chilling words in all of the Bible. "Wherefore God also gave them up." Well, oh dear Lord, do you mean you give up on people? Wherefore God also gave them up. Gave them up to what? To uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves. He's talking here about sexual sin.

And then look in verse 26, "For this cause, God gave them up unto vile affections, for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. And likewise, also the men leaving the natural use of the woman burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is unseemly and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meat." And now notice verse 28, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient, not fitting," now watch this, "Being filled with all unrighteousness."

Fornication, first thing on the list. In each of these instances where it says that God gave them up. God gave them up and God gave them over. The context is sexual sin. Sexual immorality. Are you listening? Sexual immorality is the last step on the way down.

When a nation loses its ability to discern from basic sexual morality, God says, "That's the last step. I give up. You have got it." Now America is in a crisis. America is in a crisis. And unless we have a moral rebirth, we will join the graveyard of the nations. Paul is writing to Rome. There was somebody else who wrote about Rome, his name was Gibbon. He wrote about the rise and the fall of the Roman Empire and the Roman Empire came crashing down and Gibbon said number one on the list of the things that destroyed Rome was sexual immorality. Another said that Rome dug her grave with her teeth, killed herself with illicit sex, and embalmed herself with alcohol. And I say, America is doing the same thing. And someday, some historian may write the rise and fall of the American empire.

Do you know what bothers me? Is all that we're hearing today about immorality and adultery and fornication and homosexuality, and with many, it is a big joke, and if not a joke a matter of incident and not really important. America today is treating adultery with a certain nonchalance. Jonathan Rauch said this, and I

quote, "If the adulterer takes all reasonable steps to be discreet, if he performs all other duties as parent and spouse and citizen, and his mate chooses to hang on, then nothing happened. This is not covering up so much as it is being grown up." And that eminent theologian, Ann Landers, said that adultery is now less of a sin than it used to be. And here's what she said, "The scarlet letter is gone." The scarlet letter, the A for adultery. "I don't think that it should be branded on your forehead or that you should suffer all your life with that kind of stigma."

And Tom Gitlin, New York University professor said, "Americans have gone nutty with a kind of puritanical rectitude notion that private conduct is automatically the same as public conduct. I think that somebody can be," and he uses a word here that I'm not going to repeat, "I think that somebody can be a blank in private life and be a good public servant. I am against these ritual purgations of people who think that we don't meet our exalted standard of honor."

May I tell you what the new virtue in America is? It is not moral purity. It is not fidelity. It is not chastity. It is not faithfulness. The new virtue in America is tolerance. Do you know the sin in America? The new sin is to call sin sin. And I'm well aware that there will be those who will be hostile with me for what I have to say today. That is the sin today for anybody to stand up and say sin is sin, right is right, and wrong is wrong. That's bigoted, that's narrow. They call that judging.

You know I've tried to keep my children and grandchildren away from X-rated films, but now God help us, we have X-rated news. I mean you say "the news is coming on, turn that thing off." I don't want my grandchildren to have to listen to that. We have lost a sense of moral responsibility. But people say, "But wait a minute. Don't you know that the American public have approved these things?" Why it's proven by the way that they vote. And we have come to morality by majority and we've come to the place very much like those in Plato's Republic written so long ago who lost their direction and rather than steering by the chart and the stars, they put the lantern on the bow of the ship and steered by that. That's where we are.

And yet God's word is so clear. Deuteronomy 5:18, "Neither shall thou commit adultery." And then God says in verse 29, God is speaking concerning His people, and He says, "Oh that there were such a heart in them that they would fear me and keep all my commandments always that it might be well with them and their children forever."

Now I'm old and grown. I'm not going to change my ways. I've got some children, four of them who love the Lord. I've got some grandchildren, thus far they all love the Lord. But I am concerned about the world my grandchildren will grow up in...the Lord tarries. I am concerned about what they will see and hear and feel, and will accept in this world today and God says, "Oh, that there was such a heart in them that they would fear me and keep all my commandments always that it might be well with them and with their children forever."

We don't break God's 10 commandments; we're broken on them. We're told today there's a sexual revolution. The tragedy is that not only will those who participate in this so-called sexual revolution reap the bitter fruit in their lives, but the double tragedy is that they will miss God's best, God's plan for them.

When Paul speaks here in Romans about fornication, fornication is a big word. It includes all sexual immorality. It includes sodomy, it includes premarital sex of any kind, it includes post-marital infidelity, it includes bestiality. It includes anything other than wholesome sexual relationship between a man and his mate. Marriage is a lifetime matter and sexual faithfulness is the primary key that holds a marriage together.

A nation cannot endure, a nation cannot endure without sexual morality. We've been told that it takes a village to raise a child. Friend, you've got it backward. It takes a home to make a village. Without the homes, there can be no village. It takes a home to raise a child and it takes homes to make a village, and unless our homes are solid we can have no village.

Now, the Lord Jesus put this matter of marital faithfulness right up front. Lord Jesus said in Matthew Chapter 19:5, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife and they two shall be one flesh." Do you know what our Lord is saying? Our Lord is saying that the prime, the major, the fundamental, the underlying basis of all society is the home, and the underlying basis of that is sexual fidelity. Parents are not to be our supreme commitment, I'm talking about earthly commitments. Your parents are not your supreme commitment. Now you are to love and honor your parents and take care of your parents. But Jesus said, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife."

Children are not your prime responsibility. They are your responsibility, but sir, your responsibility to your wife comes even above your responsibility to your children. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife. That is a husband-wife relationship is stronger than a child-parent relationship and parent-child relationship. That's why a woman makes a terrible mistake if while the children are small she pours all of her love, all of her devotion, all of her care into her children and neglects her husband, and then when the nest is empty, they find out that the marriage is in trouble.

Now, of course, of course we are to care for our parents. Of course, we to care for our children. But our Lord says that your prime responsibility comes before parents, before children, before business life and political life, the prime responsibility, the supreme commitment is to one's wife. We have young executives today who are expected to put loyalty to the business ahead of their family and ahead of their wife. Absolutely not. You'd better make up your mind of all earthly relationships. Your relationship to your wife is an unusual relationship that the Bible calls one flesh.

Now having said all of that, and Paul's saying, "For this cause God gave them up. For this cause God gave them up. For this cause God gave them over." I want you to see why I have entitled the message today the last step, "The Last Step on the Way Down." Let me tell you why adultery is not a proper source of humor in late night television shows. What is adultery? Why is adultery such a horrible, such a terrible, such a heinous, such a hurtful, such a hellish sin? Why? I want to give you some reasons.

Number one, adultery is a sin against one's self, S-E-L-F. Put in your margin 1 Corinthians 6:18, the Bible says flee fornication. That is, get out of there. "Every sin that a man doeth is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." He sins against his own body. There is no other sin that will do you more damage spiritually, psychologically, and physically than this sin. You say, how can it hurt me physically? But we know today that Americans are being killed literally by sexual disease.

When a man commits this sin, he sins against his own body. We hear a lot today about safe sex. Friend, the sex that God made is not supposed to be dangerous. Not supposed to be dangerous. Lord Byron was witty, charming, handsome, feated and praised. He was a man with a silver tongue, but he thought he was smarter than God. And he sinned against his own body. He consorted with impure women. And England's greatest poet and playboy said at the end, "My days are in the yellow leaf, the flower and fruit of life are gone. The worm, the canker, the grief are mine alone." He's just proving what God's word says when a man sins against his own self.

But secondly, not only is adultery a sin against one's own self, adultery is a sin against the home. The sad thing about it is the lives of innocent children are torn apart every year by adultery. And if there's anything that pains me and hurts me, it is to hear those who are living an ungodly, immoral lifestyle prate about family values.

Read Romans 2:22, "Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?" The whole second chapter of the book of Romans is about hypocrites. Those who carry big black Bibles and prate about family values. It's a sin against the home. Kent Hughes says this, and I want you to listen, "The man who commits adultery tells his child 'Your mother is not worth much and your father is a liar and a cheat. Furthermore, honor is not nearly as important as pleasure. In fact, my child, my own satisfaction is more important than you are.'" That's what the man who commits this sin tells his child.

Would you like to hear that again? "The man who commits adultery tells his child 'Your mother is not worth much and your father is a liar and a cheat. Furthermore, honor is not nearly as important as pleasure. In fact, my child, my own satisfaction is more important than you are.'"

You see, God established monogamous marriage to meet the deepest, emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual needs of a child, because you

see a child needs the context of a home. And the glue, the glue that holds the home together is sexual faithfulness. Adultery is a sin against oneself. Adultery is a sin against the home and the home is the foundation of society.

Thirdly, adultery is a sin against the church. If you're a member of this church and you're living an impure life, you have sinned against the rest of us, because we're in this together. 1 Corinthians 3:16, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." Paul says we are members one of another. Folks, we're in it together and what affects you affects me. And you cannot say what I do is nobody else's business, not in the covenant relationship of a church. When one member suffers, every member suffers. When a part of my body is sick, the rest of my body feels it. I cannot isolate any member of my body and say, "Well, that doesn't really make any difference to me."

Adultery is an infection in the body. The church is the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I beg you, I beg you, please, please, if there's immorality in your heart and in your life, get right or get out. Don't hurt the body of Christ. Don't sing in the choir, don't play in the orchestra, don't sit on the platform, don't preach from the pulpit if this is your lifestyle.

You say, "Pastor, are you telling me that I can't come here for help if I have a problem?" Yes, friend, that's what we're for. We are a society of sinners who finally realized it and have banded ourselves together to do something about it. The church is the only organization I know of you have to profess to be bad before you can join, unless it's Hell's Angels.

But what I'm saying is this, that if you think that this is a minor sin, that this is something you intend to practice, if you've not come for help and encouragement, and if you do not have a repentant spirit, you're in the wrong place. You have sinned against the church and the Bible says, "If any man defile the temple of God, which temple ye are, him shall God destroy." Because you have defiled something that is pure and holy.

Adultery is a sin against oneself. Adultery is a sin against the home. Adultery is a sin against the church. It is an infection in the body. And adultery, ladies and gentlemen, is a sin against the nation. Adultery is an act of treason. In the Old Testament, not the New Testament, in the Old Testament, adultery was a crime worthy of death. Deuteronomy 22:22, "If a man be found lying with a woman married to a husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman and the woman." Now listen to this. "So shalt thou put away evil from Israel." Put the sin not only away from the people of God, but from the nation itself. Put away evil from Israel.

May I tell you something foolish? It is foolish to say that character and leadership are not synonymous. Proverbs 14:34 says righteousness exalted the nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. Character counts. Now here's the

rubric we're listening to today. Here's what people will say today. They'll say character has nothing to do with it. Ability is what matters.

If you're on an airplane and the pilot is a good pilot and he can fly the airplane, if he can take you off safely, if he can keep you in the air safely, if he can land you safely then what difference does his character make? It makes absolutely no difference unless you want the blessing of God on that airplane. When you say that character doesn't count, do you know what you're saying? You're saying God doesn't count. You're saying we can do it by ourselves. We don't need God, we know how to do it. We don't want the blessing of God. Yes, character doesn't count I agree if there is no God, but there is a God and we want His blessing.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, this is James Dobson again and we've been listening to the late pastor of the Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. I'm referring to Dr. Adrian Rogers, my good friend and colleague. It seemed so right to me to hear a pastor call sin by its name and to remind us that the wages of sin is still death.

Adrian died 16 years ago and his messages are still right on target. America has largely forgotten God and we know where that leads. I hope you'll be with us again tomorrow for the second half of this message, which Adrian called "The Last Step on the Way Down." That kind of says it all, doesn't it? And we'll pick up right here next time.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.