HAMMOND FIRST BAPTIST PULPIT

A Sunday Morning Sermon

"Some Strange Bedfellows"

By Dr. Jack Hyles

Chapter 1

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Romans 10:3

I need your very rapt attention this morning. I'm not going to be very deep, but I'm going to be hard to follow. Now, very rarely am I ever hard to follow. My sermons are usually so simple that even Brother Hand can understand them. I make them that way.

I often say when I preach in colleges that I preach to the layman, but if a theologian will listen very carefully, he can get it, too. So I beg your rapt attention this morning. I am going to speak on the subject, "Strange Bedfellows."

I often teach around the country. In fact, I did an institute this week to a bunch of preacher boys. I often teach to preachers a little course that I have which I call, "The Proper Balance for a Christian," which is aimed at trying to teach the preachers to be well-rounded men. I know a lot of well-rounded men and a few that are not well-rounded. I want our young preachers to be men of conviction, and yet feeling. I want them to be men of love and strong character. I want them to have virtue.

I want our young folks to have the same thing. I want our young people to be strict at school and stand for what is right. Yet I want them to do it in the right kind of spirit, not in an overly pious or a hypocritical way that rubs piety in everybody's nose and disgusts the world in general. I want our people to be zealous. I want our folks to pass out tracts; and yet, I want our folks to know the Bible.

Two months after I came to pastor here, I got a letter. I guess it must have been one of the sweetest letters in my life. Strange thing, the lady is gone now. She

wasn't here very long and I can't quite remember her name, but here's what she said: "Pastor, before you came I had prayed often for God to send us a Bible-teaching type pastor, somebody who would teach us the Bible." And then she said, "I'd say the next day, 'No, Lord. We need an evangelist. Someone who's zealous and bold.' " But then she said, "The next day, I'd change my mind. 'Send us a Bible teacher.'" And she said, "I'd just pray one day, 'Send us a Bible teacher' and the next day, 'An evangelist,' and I couldn't really figure out what kind of pastor I wanted."

Then she wrote a sweet little conclusion and she said, "Brother, I didn't realize that God would send us both in one man." That was one of the sweetest letters I ever read in my life until she got mad and left! But that's what I want to be. That's what I want you to be.

I want us to be the most zealous church in town and the most honest church in town. I want us to be the church that has the most zeal and the church that has the most knowledge. I want us to be the strictest folks in town. In fact, I often tell about the fellow who said, "Brother Hyles, are you against. . .?" and I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "I haven't said it yet." I said, "There isn't anything I'm not against. I'm against it all." I want us to be strict.

At the same time, I want the most courteous folks in Hammond to be the members of First Baptist Church. I want the best Christians in the high schools to be our young people, and I want the nicest Christians in the high school to be our young people. I want the hardest working students in the high school to be our young people. I want our people to be properly balanced. This is not today's message, but this is what I teach around the country a great deal.

In the Bible, there are some strange bedfellows, some that rarely ever go together. There was a verse a while ago, where I was reading about two of them. *Psalm 5:10*, "Mercy and truth are met together." Strange bedfellows – mercy and truth. Then it says, "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Strange bedfellows are those. Hardly ever do we find righteousness and peace in the same place. In my little message that I give every so often, a little Bible study, *John 1:14* says that our Lord was full of grace and truth. Strange bedfellows are those. If you find somebody who has righteousness, he is for the right so he fights all the time. Here is a fellow who has peace; he won't fight for anything. He doesn't stand for anything. Here is a fellow who is for mercy, so he lets the whole world go free. Convicts run loose. He's against capital punishment. He lets the world go in sin. Never punish anybody. Let Cassius Clay go ahead and run loose even though he defies the government and is a draft dodger. You hardly ever find, in the same bed, mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, and then grace and truth.

In *Psalm 96* is a verse from which my book, Blue Denim and Lace, is taken. *Psalm 96:6* says, "Honour and majesty are before him." Strange bedfellows are those. Honour and majesty. You find a fellow who has majesty. He runs for

office, but he hasn't got any honor. You find a fellow who has enough honor and he won't run for office. It is hard to find honor and majesty in the same person.

Then he goes on to say, "Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." I look around this morning and I find very few people in whom I see strength and beauty. You fellows who have strength, you are as ugly as homemade sin. Then I find you ladies that have beauty and some of you men that have beauty, you're weaklings. Hard to find strength and beauty. In fact, the only place I know is looking in the mirror. That's the only place I know, but it is hard to find. Seriously, hese are strange bedfellows: righteousness and peace, mercy and truth, grace and truth, honor and majesty, beauty and strength.

It says in *Romans 10:1-3*, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

You see, it is so hard to find someone who has the proper balance between zeal and knowledge, I mean, someone who is on fire for God, and yet has the proper knowledge of the Bible. You see, Bible teaching and zeal hardly ever go together. Dr. Bob Jones used to say, "Everytime they hire a Ph.D. on the faculty at Bob Jones University, they have to have a two-week revival to offset it." Why? Because it's hard to find a Ph. D. that's on fire for God! It's hard to find a scholar that's on fire for God. It's hard to find a fellow who's on fire for God that's a scholar, too! Here's a fellow on fire for God and he says, "I don't need no learning. I'm just on fire for God and that's all." You're saying, "That's okay. That's all right," but you can still love God and have a little learning.

I like to tell the story about the teacher who sent the note home to the mother and said, "Would you have your child bathed, please? He stinks." The mother did nothing about it; the child wasn't bathed. So the teacher sent a letter home again and said, "Would you please bathe the boy? He stinks." No bath followed. The third time the teacher wrote back and said, "Please answer this letter. The boy stinks. Bathe him."

The mother wrote back and said, "He ain't no rose, don't smell him. Learn him." It is hard to find a person who has some learning and smells good, too.

Strange bedfellows are these: righteousness and peace, mercy and truth, grace and truth, majesty and honor, strength and beauty, zeal and knowledge. Then Paul said in *Romans 12:9*, "Abhor (hate) that which is evil; cleave to (love) that which is good." You know it is hard to find a person who loves and hates properly. A strange bedfellow is one who loves and hates, one who has grace and truth, one who has zeal and knowledge.

Now, I want to say three things. Please don't leave me now because I am going to go down deeper than this, and I want you to stay with me and follow. Let me have your mind this morning as well as your heart and your ear. Now listen.

1. **These should go together.** As members of First Baptist Church of Hammond, people see us in the shopping center, in the bank, on the street, in our neighborhood, in school, in the public park. Now you know what people think about me, no secret there. Many folks think that I am some sort of a nut. I hope they think I am an intelligent nut and a nut with purpose, but they think I am sort of a nut and "...those fanatics, they don't believe in drinking liquor." That's right. We don't believe in drinking one swallow of the filthy trash. I want us to be that way, and as long as I'm here, we'll be that way. That's the kind of preaching you'll get from this pulpit. I don't mind folks saying we're narrow. Let them say it. Thank God. America needs some old fashioned, narrow Christians.

On the other hand, I'm not going to walk around the streets slapping beer bottles out of people's hands. You see? I got on an airplane one time and a stewardess came up to me and said, "Do you want a Bloody Mary?" and I said, "Oh, I didn't know she was hurt." (I didn't know what a Bloody Mary was. I really didn't.) Yes, I said, "I didn't even know she was hurt." (Obviously you folks know what it is. You must be a bunch of drunkards.) I didn't know. I'm a Christian. I didn't know.

She said to the fellow next to me, "Would you like a Bloody Mary?" and he said, "Yes, ma'am, I would." I told her, "I don't drink any kind of poison." I was just kidding her a little bit, you know, and I had already been nice to her. I had already been courteous. I had already winked at her when I got on the plane and tried to be courteous. (Now, please don't let that out. I know what's going to happen tomorrow.) I was courteous and kind to her. She had spilled some coffee on me as she came by and I was nice and didn't say anything bad about it, and she appreciated it and so I had been kidding her a bit.

The fellow was beside me drinking his Bloody Mary, and he said, "Why don't you drink?" I said, "I'm a Christian." He said, "So am I" and he said, "What profession are you in?" I said, "I'm a preacher." He said, "What kind?" I said, "A Baptist preacher." He said, "Where?" I said, "First Baptist Church Hammond, Indiana." He said, "Why is it you don't talk like it? Where is your hometown?" I said, "I grew up in Dallas, Texas." He said, "Do you know any preachers there?" I said, "I know every preacher there. I pastored a church there seven years." He almost dropped his Bloody Mary. He said, "Do you know my pastor?" I said, "What's the church?" He named his church and I told him I knew that pastor and he said,"Don't tell him about this!"

Now, I didn't say, "I'm just going to tell him. Naughty, naughty on you and I'm writing your name down!" No, I didn't tell him that. I didn't do that. You see, I want us to stand for what's right, but I want us to be decent about it, nice about

it. I don't want us to think we are holier than thou. I do not care if the whole city of Hammond hates my insides because I hate the liquor traffic and because I hate Communism, and because I hate the social tendencies, and because I hate the hippie parades they had in Washington the other day.

I don't care who hates me because of that, but I tell you what. I am going to speak to you nicely on the street and I am going to pay my debts on time, and I am going to try to show the city of Hammond that you can be decent, and you can be nice, and you can be courteous, and you can be honest, and at the same time be an old-fashioned, rock-ribbed, Fundamentalist Christian. That's what I want you to be. I don't want you to compromise to get folks to like you, but I do want you to be the kind of person personally who can let people know that you can be a nice person and a good guy and yet, be a Christian. They ought to go together.

Courtesy and truth ought to go together. Righteousness and peace ought to go together. Grace and truth ought to go together. You ought to have love and yet, stand for something. Honor and majesty ought to go together. Zeal and knowledge, strength and beauty, love and hate ought to go together.

2. **They do go together.** Not only ought they go together but they do go together. They must go together. They have to go together. Billy Sunday used to say, "You can't love flowers unless you hate weeds" and you can't. Go out someday, you folks that love flowers, and fertilize your weeds. Go on. I don't want to be negative.

So many theologians in our Bible schools and Bible colleges and seminaries are way out in left field on this. They'll get up there and say, "Don't preach any negative gospel, don't get up there and say, 'Thou shalt not.'" Dr. Bill Rice was preaching on why it's wrong to dance, and why it's wrong to curse, and why it's wrong to smoke, and why it's wrong to drink and the pastor called him off and said, "Look, you ought to preach a positive message. It shouldn't be negative." Dr. Bill Rice said, "You know, I believe you're right." He got up that night and announced that the next night he was going to preach a positive message. He said, "I've been preaching on what's wrong with drinking, what's wrong with dancing, what's wrong with smoking, what's wrong with cursing" and he said, "I realize now I ought to be positive." So the next night he preached and his first point was, "I'm positive I'm against drinking" and the second, third, and fourth points figure out for yourself.

I told you it was going to be deep. Now follow me. I'm saying that you cannot have true peace without righteousness. You can't do it. You see, you must punish unrighteousness in order to have peace. Now follow me. There is no way in this world to have peace, true peace, without righteousness. They must go together. That's why you can withdraw your troops from Vietnam all you want to, but you won't have peace that way. You see, you may have some kind

of a synthetic temporary peace, but you cannot and will not have real peace until wrong is punished and justice is met. That's the only way.

In the Edenburg Review in Scotland many years ago they had a sign that said, "The judge is condemned when the guilty is acquitted." I flew Friday afternoon to Baltimore and preached there Friday night and flew back during the wee hours of the morning. I got on the airplane on the way to Baltimore. (It didn't even dawn on me that we'd have as many hippies on the plane as we did.) The plane was almost full of hippies, and I talked to a few of them. There were many of them in the back of the plane talking, and they said, "What are you going to Washington for? For the moratorium?" I said, "Maybe." They got to talking and I just listened to those dumb bunnies. I just listened and they kept saying, "Peace, peace, peace; yes, have peace."

No, you cannot have peace. Look, as long as you've got a criminal running loose in your neighborhood, you'd better not sell your gun. I'm saying godless Communism has dedicated herself to conquering and ruling the world! Unless we take care of the criminals we will not have any real peace. Real peace never comes without righteousness. They're strange but necessary bedfellows.

Now the same thing is true about grace and truth. Grace and truth must go together. You can have no grace unless you have truth. You can have no real love unless you have love for truth; love for truth hates error. You see, there can be no quality existing without the presence of its counterpart (read my book Blue Denim and Lace). You cannot be hot if you've never been cold. You cannot be tall if there are no short people around.

I was in Japan. I spoke in Japan, and I walked down the street looking down on the heads of everybody. I just felt like a Harlem Globetrotter, except a white one. I felt like a professional basketball player. I got legs walking around Japan. Why? Everybody was a runt. You see, unless the opposite quality exists – unless you have fear, you can have no courage. Unless you've been empty, you cannot know what it means to be full. Unless you hate error, you cannot love truth, and that's why grace cannot be grace unless it's built on the foundation of truth.

Let me illustrate with our race problem. You can no more legislate people to love Negroes than you can cut the moon in pieces and have it for lunch. You can pass all the laws you want to pass, but you're not going to legislate love. You can't do it. The only way you're going to have the race problem solved is when people believe the truth, and know Him Who is the truth and get born again; then the love of Christ fills their hearts and they are compelled to love their neighbor.

You can pass all the laws you want to pass. You are not going to have love or grace until you have truth. You can have no true majesty without honor. Majesty is not majesty unless it is honored majesty. You can have no beauty without stength. Now listen carefully, I know girls that spend more time at their

vanity bench looking at their faces and putting a mask on and getting what you call "beautiful," and yet they do not work on the strength of character, decency, principles, virtue, honesty, integrity and loyalty. If you don't work on that, you have a beauty that has no strength. It is not beauty at all; it is only a mask that you wear on Sunday. After a while, the real you shows through that mask and you don't have beauty at all. You can't have knowledge or zeal without knowledge and vice versa. You can't have love without hate.

Let me say very quickly, there are three things that I want you to get. In the first place, every one of us should be well-rounded, well-balanced Christians. We ought to ask God to give us love for hate and right for wrong. We ought to ask God to give us a stand for the truth and yet, to stand properly. As I say so often when I am preaching to young preachers, by the grace of God we will stand for this Book. We'll fight the Devil, the liquor traffic, we'll fight Communism. We will fight and die for truth. At the same time, personally, we'll be kind, friendly, loving. As the Quaker preacher said, "I would not hurt thee. I would not harm thee. I would do thee no ill. I would not lift up my hand against thee, but, Sir, thou art standing where I am about to shoot."

Don't you see what I am saying? I am saying you don't have to push old men down steep hills in wheelchairs to stand for the truth. Again, I say to preachers, be a Fundamentalist who stands for something. If someday he accidentally made a mistake and loved somebody, I think God would forgive him for it. On the other hand, the world is so lovesick for preachers who don't stand for the truth, they don't love at all. You don't love a man who is plunging down toward Hell, going to die without love, face God and burn forever in a lake of fire and brimstone, if you do not stand up and tell him about the Truth. It is a shallow, synthetic, critical kind of love.

The kind of love that I am talking about is a kind of love that says to a lost one, "You're going to Hell and I don't want you to go. Christ went to the cross and died for you; and if you call on Him, He will save you and take you to Heaven. Oh, please! Come and trust Him!" That's the kind of love I am talking about, the love that warns often, but does in tenderness. It's a love that spanks, but does so in compassion. It's a love that rebukes, but does it with tears. It's a love that stands firm, but at the same time, the heart is broken when it has to stand firm against someone it loves.

3. They do go together in Jesus Christ. Not only should we try to have these bedfellows – and the real McCoy will bring the other bedfellow with it – they must go together. I say very quickly, and this in the last place, they do go together in Jesus Christ.

Jesus offers mercy, but based only on truth. He offers peace, but based only on righteousness. He offers grace, but based only on truth. He offers majesty, but only through honor. He offers beauty, but only a strong beauty. He offers zeal, but only through knowledge. He offers love, but based only on hate for wrong.

Christ is the perfect blend of love and hate, strength and beauty, honor and majesty, zeal and knowledge, righteousness and peace, mercy and truth. Let me illustrate what I mean.

Let's take mercy and truth. God is a God who is merciful. Now, follow me carefully. God is a merciful God and He comes up and says to Mr. Streeter, who is a sinner, "Mr. Streeter, I want to forgive you. Come back to Me. So, would you come to Me?" Now this was God's mercy.

God's righteousness says, "Hold it, Mr. Streeter. Hold it! You've sinned, and that sin must be paid for. You can't come to Me unless that sin is paid for." Now watch me again. His mercy says, "Come unto Me," but His justice says, "You cannot come until that sin is paid for."

Now follow me. His mercy said, "I'll take your place. I'll sit where you sat. I'll pay the price on the cross for your sin. I'll take your sin upon Me and I'll die a bloody death and condemn My own soul into Hell so that My justice can be satisfied, and because of My mercy, I must have My justice met. I must have My righteousness met. But I am so merciful, I'll pay the price myself, and so, Mr. Streeter, on that cross I went and I paid the price for your sins. Now my justice is satisfied, and now would you come to Me?" Once again, fellowship is restored.

Why? Because of the justice. Justice and mercy. Mercy and truth. Look, that's why I say so often that Christ died for God. Yes, Christ died for sinners, sure, but Christ died for God, for God would never have taken one sinner back to Himself. He would never have offered mercy to anybody unless His justice had been met, and His justice was met on the cross. That's why you cannot be saved unless you come to the way of the cross, no other way but the way of the cross, for "the way of the cross leads home."

Why? He was not just some man dying on a cross showing us how to die, not somebody suffering on a cross to show us how to suffer, but Jesus was suffering on the cross to satisfy the righteous, holiness of God. So man now can come to God, and God can be merciful and righteous at the same time, and, by the way, right in there, dear friends, is the crux of the entire plan of salvation. That is why joining a church is not going to take you to Heaven for God's justice has to be satisfied. God said "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." *Ezekiel 18:40* Your sin must be paid for. Either you pay for it or accept Christ's payment for it and, if you don't accept His payment for it, you have got to pay for it and go to Hell yourself.

Join all the churches you want to, but how about your debt? You can be baptized all you want to, but how about your debt? Do good deeds all you want to, but how about your debt? Take communion all you want to, but how about your debt? Go to confession all you want to, but how about your debt? There is a debt, ladies and gentlemen, charged against your record. That is called "a sin debt." Somebody has to die and go to Hell. Christ has done it for you or you

must do it for yourself, and that's why the only people who are going to Heaven are those who trusted what Jesus did on Calvary as the substitute for their sins.

God's mercy and truth have met. God offers peace, but peace only through righteousness. He looks at Mr. Streeter and He says, "Mr. Streeter I want you to have peace. Come to Me and have peace." Hold it! Peace He offers, but not yet. You have to have righteousness first, and where do you get that righteousness? It is imputed to you by the gift of God's righteousness through Jesus Christ His Son and so, in Jesus Christ, righteousness and peace meet.

Let us pray.