

26-0719a Transcript

26-0719a - *The Neighbor From Hell*, Tom Freed

Bible Readers: Roger Raines and Kevin Woosley

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The Neighbor From Hell

Scripture Readings

1st Reading (0:04 - 0:46): Roger Raines

James 1:13-15: (0:04) Good morning. I'll be reading from the book of James, chapter 1, verses 13 through 15. (0:14) Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God. (0:20) For God cannot be tempted by evil, and he himself does not tempt anyone. (0:27) But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. (0:34) Then, when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin. (0:39) And when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. (0:44) This concludes this reading. (0:46)

2nd Reading (0:51 - 1:28): Kevin Woosley

1 Peter 5:8-9: (0:51) Good morning. (0:53) I'll be reading out of 1 Peter, chapter 5, verses 8 and 9. (1:04) And this is out of the New King James. (1:06) It says, Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, (1:15) seeking whom he may devour. (1:17) Resist him steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. (1:27) And that concludes the reading. (1:28)

Transcript (0:04 - 24:31), Preacher: Tom Freed

(1:33) Good morning. Good seeing everybody.

(1:37) Scott had me worried (1:40) that John did the same sermon, but... (1:44) you have to come tonight to hear what he has to say.

(1:49) Yeah, my sermon title is The Neighbor from Hell.

(1:55) It's not a Netflix documentary or an A&E special, but it sure could be. (2:01) I know there's similar ones. (2:05) I know it's early, but I want you to use your imagination right now.

(2:11) Imagine you're a dog who had a rough life. (2:15) Abandoned, mistreated, and left in the pond with little hope. (2:20) Then one day you get adopted by the most loving, awesome, and amazing master you could ever imagine.

(2:27) He brings you home and completely changes your life. (2:31) He feeds you the healthiest food and gives you the freshest, coolest water. (2:35) He provides safe toys, a big spacious backyard, and a warm, comfortable bed.

(2:46) Best of all, this loving master builds a strong hedge all around the yard to protect you from anything that can hurt you. (2:55) Life couldn't get much better. (2:57) You've gone from the pound to paradise.

(3:01) But there's just one problem. (3:05) Right next door lives a neighbor who is always trying to get your attention. (3:11) Every day you smell him cooking out on the grill and it makes your mouth water.

(3:18) You're sick of the same healthy food day after day. (3:21) So you start bagging and pacing by the fence. (3:27) Soon he tosses you a piece of burger.

(3:30) Nothing has ever tasted better. (3:33) You're hooked. (3:35) You go back again and again.

(3:38) He gives you all the things you know you shouldn't have. (3:42) Pizza, hot dogs, cookies, Twinkies, Doritos, until you're sick and vomiting. (3:50) But that doesn't stop you.

(3:53) There's a small opening in the hedge and before long you're sneaking through into his yard. (4:00) He has bigger and better toys. (4:03) Stray dogs that take you on fun adventures.

(4:08) And a big mud pit you love rolling around in. (4:13) Deep down you know you're doing everything you shouldn't do. (4:18) But it feels so much more exciting than the boring and safe life back home.

(4:25) Eventually you hear the loving voice of your master calling your name. (4:30) You come back with your head down, covered in mud, sick to your stomach. (4:37) And what does a master do? (4:39) He doesn't reject you.

(4:42) He hugs you, washes you clean, and welcomes you home. (4:47) The problem is you never move. (4:50) That neighbor stays right next door.

(4:54) Always cooking, always tempting, always ready to lure you back the moment you let your guard down. (5:04) This isn't really a story about dogs. (5:08) It's about us and it's about God.

(5:11) I hope you knew that wasn't a story about dogs. (5:15) Had to be too obvious. (5:17) Our Heavenly Father, the loving master.

(5:23) Many of us were once like that abandoned dog. (5:26) Lost in sin, mistreated by the world, and without hope. (5:31) I know I was.

(5:34) Then, in His incredible mercy, God adopted us. (5:39) He rescued us. (5:41) Not because we earned it, but by the precious blood of His own Son, Jesus Christ.

(5:48) He brought us into His family and has given us every good thing. (5:55) Think about what He provides. (5:58) He feeds us with the healthiest spiritual food, the living Word of God.

(6:04) He gives us living water that truly satisfies the deepest thirst in the soul, John 4.14. (6:12) He protects us with a strong hedge of His grace. (6:17) The fellowship of His church and the wisdom of His commandments. (6:23) The Bible says His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness.

(6:30) 2 Peter 1.3 (6:35) In the Master's yard, we find real safety, real purpose, and a deep joy of belonging to the One that loves us perfectly. (6:47) Not because we deserve it, but because He is good. (6:53) Yet, how often do we grow tired of the same old thing? (6:59) How often do we stand at the fence, sniffing the air for something that looks more exciting? (7:07) How often do we start believing the lie that the Master's provision isn't enough? (7:14) I know I've done this.

I'm sure some of you have too. (7:19) We're provided everything by God, so many great things, yet it's not enough. (7:25) We want something more.

We want, you know, what we shouldn't have. (7:34) That neighbor next door is Satan, the enemy of your soul. (7:38) The Bible calls him the God of this world, 2 Corinthians 4.4 (7:44) A roaring lion seeking someone to devour, 1 Peter 5.8 (7:50) And a liar and murderer from the beginning, John 8.44 (7:55) Doesn't sound like a great neighbor, does it? (7:59) He doesn't have your best intentions in mind.

(8:04) He isn't usually coming up with horns and pitchforks. (8:08) He comes with the smell of the grill. (8:12) He comes with just a little taste.

(8:15) It's not always obvious when Satan tempts us. (8:19) Like I said, he doesn't come on fire, this flaming demon, saying, this way to hell. (8:28) He appears as an angel of light.

(8:31) He deceives us. It looks good, what he offers. (8:35) You might think he's there to help you, to provide something for you that you don't have.

(8:42) But really, he's deceiving you. (8:46) He offers a junk food of sin. (8:49) Pleasures that feel good for a season, but leave us sick and empty.

(8:56) He shows us bigger and better toys. (8:59) Money, success, entertainment, lust, anger, pride, gossip. (9:05) Whatever appeals to our flesh.

(9:08) He invites us to run with a rebellious pack of dogs. (9:14) And roll in the filth of the world. (9:17) You know, you always have that friend or friend that you know you shouldn't hang out with, but they're always fun.

(9:24) You have the best time of your life, but most of the time, eventually you end up getting in trouble. (9:32) And here's the deception. (9:35) He always makes his yard look far more exciting than the master's safe orderly one.

(9:42) You know, the world, and what Satan presents, does look exciting at times. (9:49) You know, church, as great as being a Christian can be, it can definitely seem boring at times. (9:56) We're not allowed to do anything, you know.

(9:59) We can have fun, but not the same kind of fun. (10:04) But the world seems far more exciting. (10:06) You know, they're partying, you know, sex, drugs, and rock and roll, whatever your heart desires.

(10:14) That doesn't mean it's safe or right, but the devil definitely makes it look more appealing. (10:24) The dangerous truth is, there's often a small opening in the hedge. (10:30) A compromise we allow, a habit we justify, a relationship we know isn't right.

(10:38) Or a corner of our heart that we haven't fully surrendered. (10:44) All he needs is a foothold. (10:47) You know, it doesn't take much for Satan to get into our lives.

(10:51) And before you know it, we've backslid and we're deep in sin. (10:58) Through that opening, the neighbor starts feeding us. (11:01) And before long, we're spending more time in the master's yard, in the neighbor's yard, than at home in the master's yard.

(11:13) Who are you getting fed from? (11:15) That is the question this morning. (11:19) Are you feeding daily on the pure milk and meat of God's Word? (11:24) Or are you snacking on the neighbor's junk food? (11:27) Are you listening to the voice of your master? (11:31) Or are you being drawn away by the sizzle of the world's grill? (11:39) Look at the story again. (11:41) The dog keeps going back, as Scripture says.

(11:46) A dog returns to its vomit, and a sow that has walked returns to her wallowing in the mud. (11:53) 2 Peter 2.22 (11:56) It paints kind of a disgusting picture of what it's like when we return to sin over and over. (12:03) We're washed clean, and what do we do? (12:05) The first second we get sometimes, we're rolling in the mud again.

(12:09) I know that happens to me. (12:14) He gets sick, feels guilty, comes home ashamed and covered in mud. (12:20) And the master still hugs him, washes him clean, and welcomes him home.

(12:25) But soon, the smell from next door draws him back, again and again. (12:31) That's a dangerous cycle so many of us know all too well. (12:37) Even as a Christian, we get caught up in this cycle.

(12:42) Even as a long-term Christian, I still give in to sin over and over. (12:50) And God always welcomes us back and cleanses us. (12:55) That's great, but it's also a serious warning.

(13:00) We can easily take God's grace and His mercy for granted, and become comfortable returning to sin. (13:10) You know, knowing that He's going to forgive us, how many times have we sinned? (13:15) Thinking, well, you know, I know God in His Word says, I'll be forgiven. (13:21) Even if I ask 70 times 7, but that's a trap we could fall into.

(13:31) What then? (13:33) Shall we sin because we're not under the law, but under grace? (13:37) By no means, Romans 6.15. (13:41) We shouldn't be doing that, sinning over and over, just because we'll be forgiven. (13:47) We should do everything we can to avoid sin. (13:52) The neighbor never moves away.

(13:56) The temptation is always right next door. (14:01) The Christian life is not a one-time decision followed by smooth sailing. (14:07) God allows Satan to stay next door and tempt us.

(14:14) For whatever reason he has. (14:16) It's called free will, that we have the choice. (14:21) It's a daily choice to stay in the Master's yard.

(14:25) If He didn't give us a choice in free will, it would basically be like Him kidnapping us. (14:33) And that's not love. (14:35) If somebody kidnapped you and locked you away, would you call that love? (14:42) I don't think many of us would.

(14:44) He gives us the free will, He gives us the choice. (14:49) The Scriptures are full of this same cycle. (14:52) In the Garden of Eden, the serpent was right there in paradise.

(14:59) Tempting Adam and Eve with something better. (15:04) That forbidden fruit they know they shouldn't have. (15:07) It's always what we shouldn't have that we want.

(15:11) The children of Israel, even after God delivered them from Egypt, (15:17) kept looking back and craving the food of their own lives. (15:21) Numbers 11. (15:24) They looked back and said, if we only had the fish and the cucumbers and the garlic.

(15:31) After all God had done for them. (15:34) And they complained. (15:36) And we do too.

(15:38) Even Jesus Himself was tempted by the devil in the wilderness. (15:43) Offered the kingdoms of the world if He would just bow down. (15:47) Matthew 4. (15:51) Satan has power.

(15:53) He has the power to offer Jesus the whole world. (15:58) He has the power to offer us what our hearts desire. (16:03) And if you give into it, He'll give it to you in abundance.

(16:10) These examples show the external way we're tempted. (16:16) Let's look at what happens internally. (16:20) James 1.13-15 explains exactly how it works.

(16:26) Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God. (16:31) For God cannot be tempted with evil. (16:35) And He Himself tempts no one.

(16:38) But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. (16:44) Then desire, when it's conceived, gives birth to sin. (16:50) And sin, when it's fully grown, brings forth death.

(16:56) We can see internally. (17:00) We begin by thinking about the sin. (17:04) The more we think about it, the more it grows inside us.

(17:07) Just like a pregnant woman with a child. (17:11) That child continues to grow just like sin. (17:13) The more we think about it, the bigger it gets.

(17:17) Until eventually, we give birth to that sin and commit the act. (17:26) When the opportunity arises, when we've thought about it long enough, (17:30) we're going to eventually give in. (17:34) And when we commit that sin and continue to do it, (17:37) it grows just like a child in the world.

(17:40) And when it's fully grown, it brings forth death. (17:44) Think about that sin that you commit and keep committing. (17:48) That sin grows.

(17:50) It becomes bigger and bigger. (17:53) And sometimes it gets so big, you can't control it. (17:58) And it owns you.

(18:00) That's when it's full grown. (18:01) That's when you're addicted. (18:03) That's when you can't stop committing the sin.

(18:09) And it's very hard to overcome it. (18:13) That's definitely why we need to stop sin and our thoughts at the root. (18:19) That small opening in the head always starts with desire.

(18:24) The neighbor knows exactly what smells good to you. (18:28) Satan's great for that. (18:29) He knows exactly how to tempt us.

(18:35) So what do we do? (18:39) We can't move the neighbor out. (18:41) We can strengthen the hedge and train our ears to our master's loving voice. (18:48) First, feed daily on the right food.

(18:53) Make time in God's word non-negotiable. (18:56) The more you feast on what is healthy and nourishing, (18:59) the less appealing the neighbor's junk food becomes. (19:05) Man shall not live by bread alone, (19:07) but every word that comes out of the mouth of God.

(19:10) Matthew 4.4. (19:15) Second, repair the openings in the heads. (19:19) Be honest with your

weak spots, (19:21) whether it's loss, greed, bitterness, laziness, anger, or anything else. (19:26) Bring them to God in prayer.

(19:28) Confess them to a faithful brother or sister. (19:31) Build accountability. (19:34) Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.

(19:38) Matthew 26.41. (19:42) Third, remember whose voice is calling. (19:46) When you hear the master calling you home, run to him quickly. (19:51) Don't wait until you're sick and covered in mud.

(19:54) His arms are always open. (19:57) He specializes in washing us clean and giving us a fresh start. (20:02) Remember the father in the parable of the prodigal son.

(20:08) While he was still a long way off, (20:10) his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him. (20:15) He ran to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him. (20:19) Luke 15.20. (20:23) We need to return to godly sin.

(20:27) He's always willing to welcome us back. (20:30) There's more joy over one sinner who repents than 99 that don't. (20:39) Fourth, love the master more than your neighbor's yard.

(20:43) The best defense against temptation is greater love for the one who rescued you. (20:50) When you truly delight in him, (20:52) the temporary pleasures next door lose their power. (20:57) Submit yourselves, therefore, to God.

(20:59) Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (21:03) James 4.7. (21:04) The devil has to flee if you resist temptation. (21:11) He has to because God has said it.

(21:15) And whatever God says will happen. (21:20) The problem is even if you resist it and he flees, (21:23) he may come back at a later time and tempt you with something else. (21:31) The last thing is stay together with the master's pack.

(21:35) The stray dogs are much less tempting when you're running with the church. (21:39) The family of God. (21:42) We need each other to stay strong and encourage one another daily.

(21:47) As Solomon wrote, (21:49) Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. (21:54) A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. (21:57) Ecclesiastes 4.12. (22:00) The more people you have together, the more you're with the church, (22:04) the bigger the group, (22:06) the harder it is for the devil to attack you.

(22:11) Remember, (22:12) our enemy is like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (22:19) Lions normally don't attack the strong. (22:22) They go after the weak, the isolated and the distracted.

(22:28) He waits for the one who wanders from the pack, (22:31) the one who lowers his guard, (22:34) the one who begins craving something other than what the master has provided. (22:39) Stay close to the master. (22:44) Stay in his yard.

(22:46) Stay with his people. (22:51) Church, (22:52) the neighbor from hell is real and he is persistent. (22:57) But our master is greater.

(23:00) His love is stronger. (23:03) His yard is safer. (23:05) And one day the hedge will become a

wall.

(23:08) Temptation will be gone forever. (23:10) And we will sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb (23:14) with no neighbor to tempt us ever again. (23:20) Until that glorious day, (23:23) let's choose daily who we will listen to.

(23:28) Be like Joseph who says, (23:30) for me and my house, (23:32) we will serve the Lord. (23:37) Let us refuse the scraps from the neighbor's grill (23:40) and feast on the abundance of what our loving master provides. (23:46) Let us stay faithful in the yard he has given us.

(23:52) If you've been spending too much time next door, (23:56) if you're sick from the junk you've been eating, (24:00) tired and ashamed and covered in mud, (24:02) come home this morning. (24:05) The master is calling your name. (24:08) His arms are wide open.

(24:10) He is ready to wash you and clean you and restore you completely. (24:19) If you need a response, (24:21) to give your life to God, (24:24) to be restored, (24:25) or to ask for prayer to strengthen your head, (24:29) come forward as we stand and sing. (24:31)