

Sermon for Sunday, November 19, 1978, by Dr. Andrew A. Jumper. D.D., Pastor  
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"THE LINUS COMPLEX"

Romans 12:9-21

Text: "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good."

Romans 12:9

One of the best comic strips in the funny papers today is about a little boy named Charlie Brown. The author of this comic strip is a Christian and frequently the strip has a biblical theme. In this comic strip, the author has developed a number of characters, each of which represents a personality type that most of us run into every day. For example, there is Lucy who is the typical, dominating personality, demanding that everyone do as she says and if they don't she promises a punch in the nose. But one of my favorite characters is Linus. Actually, Linus is a bright, intelligent sort of person who usually knows the right answer. But there is one problem. Linus is insecure. He is so insecure, he is still carrying his baby blanket. Linus represents a lot of us. We may be very grownup and in many ways very mature and very intelligent. But we still have our fears and insecurities. We are still carrying our baby blanket of one sort or another. Because life can be threatening often we are holding on to some form of security blanket. In the comic strip, someone is always trying to get Linus' blanket away from him, but he has a death grip on it! And we are like that. Sometimes we are holding on to the wrong things in life with a death grip.

So, this morning I want to talk about the Linus complex. I want to talk about some of those things we are holding on to that we need to let go. I suppose in one way or another there are things all of us need to hold on to. Our problem arises when we hold on to the wrong things.

For example, over in II Timothy, St. Paul talks about those who are holding on to the wrong thing. He says, "For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion, but denying the power of it." So, there are a lot of people today who are holding the form of religion like a security blanket. However, they are not letting the power of religion change their lives. They are denying the power of it.

When you deny the power of Jesus to change your life, you may hold on to the form of religion like a security blanket, but we turn out like St. Paul said, "lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant," and all the rest. The real problem for most of us is not whether we should hold on to something or not. No, the real question is, will we hold on to the right blanket. What security blankets are you holding on to this morning? Let me share with you some things the Bible says we ought to hold on to.

First, the Bible says we ought to hold on to our forgiveness. Sometimes we do things we ought not to do. We get involved in things we should have avoided. We commit sins and our guilt becomes an intolerable burden. But in Hebrews 4:14-16 we read this incredible statement, "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Well, that is an incredible statement. It recognizes that we will fail. We will stumble and fall, we will grow weary and faint. But Jesus understands our weakness. He has become flesh--he has taken on human form--and he has endured all the temptations that we have. And, while he never sinned, he knows what we endure. He can sympathize with our

weaknesses. For that reason, says the Bible, we can expect to receive grace and mercy from him.

Well, I don't know about you, but that thrills my heart. How thrilling it is to know that Jesus understands. If I have confessed him as my Lord and Saviour; if I have accepted his death on the cross for my sins, as long as I hold on to that security blanket, the Bible says that I will receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

As a pastor I frequently deal with people who are caught up in some sin or some failure. And often the biggest problem is the sense of guilt that is crushing them down. They feel that what they have done is unforgivable. They feel that God can never forgive them. But the wonderful news of the Bible is that Jesus understands and he offers to keep on forgiving us. And that's a security blanket we all need to hold on to. As St. Paul put it, "Let us hold fast our confession..."

A second security blanket the Bible says we ought to hold on to is our progress in the Christian faith. St. Paul writes in Philippians 3:13 and 14, "But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God." And then St. Paul concludes, "Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Are you holding on to your Christian growth? It is hard to do, isn't it? It would be nice if the Christian life were something we could strive for, achieve, and then never have to work again. But life doesn't work that way. When I counsel with young couples who are planning to get married I tell them that marriage may be made in heaven, but it is worked out down here. I tell them that as long as they live they will have to work at making a good marriage. Well, the same is true for the Christian life. We never arrive. We are always in pilgrimage, we are always journeying. We need to hold on to that. Sometimes I see people who accept Jesus as Saviour and for a time they are excited. They study the Bible, they are regular at church and Sunday School, they work at changing old patterns and old styles of life. But time goes by and they don't struggle as hard. They begin to slip back. And, before you know it, they have become inactive at church. Why? What went wrong? They didn't hold on to what they had attained. They didn't keep pressing on.

Let me say to many of us this morning that to grow and keep on growing in the Christian faith is not easy. That first thrill and excitement of being a Christian begins to dim and we begin to fall away. But you know, that thrill and excitement ought to grow and mature and develop. We can't expect to keep that same sort of thrill. For example, when you kissed your wife for the first time, it was a thrilling experience. But you can kiss a girl for the first time only once! So with Jesus. That first thrill when you invite him into your heart fades. And either it goes away or a new sort of thrill that is deeper and more mature replaces it. St. Paul says we must hold true to what we have attained. So we need to hold on to our spiritual growth.

A third thing we Christians need to hold on to as a sort of security blanket is the Bible. In Philippians 2:16 St. Paul writes, "Hold fast the word of life..." A lot of people are not holding on to the Bible today. The Bible gives us some rules and guidelines for living, but people don't want to follow God's law. The Bible tells us how we ought to relate to others, but we don't want to treat people that way. The Bible tells us how we ought to use our money, how we ought to serve God, but we want to do other things. So we abandon the Bible. If you look at the world today you see a world that is living without the Bible and life does not work very well that way. Even in the church, we see how the Bible has been abandoned and the church is involved in things that Jesus never commanded. O, how tragic it is when we do not hold on to the Bible. We have no standard for life. We have no guide, no yardstick, by which to measure life. Whoever you are this morning, I

beseech you, I plead with you, hold fast to the word of life, hold on to the Bible. It is God's word to us, it contains his rules for our lives, and when we depart from them, life does not work very well. What the world today needs so desperately--and what the church needs--are men and women who love Jesus and who are holding on to the Bible as the word of God. Yes, that's the Linus complex we need today.

A fourth security blanket we Christians need to hold on to is eternal life. St. Paul writes in I Timothy 6:12 that we should "take hold of the eternal life" to which we have been called. Let me ask you this: what is your goal in life? What do you hope to achieve? If you are young, you will probably say that you want to be a success, that you want to climb the corporate ladder, that you want to achieve financial security. If you are old, maybe you will say that you want to leave your children or your grandchildren a good inheritance. But lift your eyes above this earthly life and think in cosmic terms, think in terms of eternity--what do you hope to achieve? Would you like to have eternal life? Well, I suspect each of us this morning would like to say, "yes, I would like to have eternal life. And do you know how you receive eternal life? It is to accept Jesus as your Saviour, to live for him, and when this earthly life is over, you will be with Jesus for all of eternity. We lower our eyes to earthly things. We begin to desire success; we begin to desire material things; we begin to want worldly acclaim and worldly things. Is that true in your life? I know it sometimes is in mine. Heaven seems a long way off and eternity seems far away. But the things of the world are so near! And I begin to want the things of the world. Do you do that? But the Bible says, "Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called..."

We need to remember that. We need to hold on to eternal life like Linus with his death grip on his blanket. Finally, there is a fifth thing we need to hold on to. We read it in our scripture reading for this morning. St. Paul says, "hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good..." Do you know, it is hard to hate evil? Evil can be very attractive. Evil is a lot of beautiful things and it is hard to hate them. On top of that, it is hard to hold on to what is good. What is good and right and true sometimes isn't much fun! Do you hold on to what is good? And what is the good that we ought to hold on to? St. Paul tells us. We read it earlier. Here is what he says the good is: "Love one another," he says. Are you loving people this morning? For example, winter is coming on. There are a lot of people in our city who don't have enough warm clothing and who can't afford to pay their gas bills. Do you care? Does that matter to you? I know we get impatient with government programs that have a lot of waste to them, that have a lot of abuse and which have a lot of corruption and maybe some people seem to be undeserving. But aside from your impatience with those programs, does it matter to us that people are cold--or hungry--or suffering? Well, St. Paul says, "Hold fast to what is good." And maybe if we Christians had held fast to that particular blanket, the government never would have needed to step in.

Well, there are a lot of things we Christians need to hold fast to. We need a Linus complex when it comes to the forgiveness of our sins, when it comes to our growth in spiritual maturity, when it comes to holding on to the Bible, when it comes to holding on to eternal life. But we also need to hold on to what is good by loving one another.

Central Presbyterian has a reputation in this city and across our denomination for being a great, evangelical church that takes the Bible seriously, which takes the Spiritual life seriously. Now the time has come for us to be equally well-known for taking seriously what the Bible has to say about our duty to our fellow man. It is time for us to develop a Linus complex about holding on to the good in our love for one another. Yes, it is time for us to show the world how much we care.

One thing we will do is provide blankets for those who will be cold this winter. On Thanksgiving morning, next Sunday, and the Sunday following, we will bring blankets and canned food. We will distribute these things through the New Life Evangelistic Center because it not only provides for the material needs of men, but it also shares Jesus with them. We hope to have a thousand blankets. Most of us have one or two or three blankets up on the closet shelf we are not using. Bring them. If you don't have any unused ones, you can give a check for \$10. But let's do our part at Central to see that no one goes cold or suffers this winter in our city. Let's have an outpouring of concern and love as we hold fast to what is good.

Who cares about being forgiven? I do. I'm sure you do. Who cares about growing in our spiritual life? I do and I know you do. Who cares about the Bible and believing it and standing on it? I do and so do you. Who cares about eternal life and holding on to it? I do. You do. Who cares about our brothers in need. I pray God that we both do.

We need to remember that we need to hold on to eternal life like a man with his hands going to his blanket. Finally, there is a fifth thing we need to hold on to. We need to hold on to our scripture reading for this morning. St. Paul says, "I have held fast to what is good..." Do you know, it is hard to hold on to what is good. Evil is a lot of beautiful things and it is hard to hold on to that, it is hard to hold on to what is good. What is good and what is bad sometimes look much alike. Do you hold on to what is good? And what is the good that we ought to hold on to? St. Paul tells us, "We need to hold on to what he says the good for." "Love one another," he says. "The way loving people this morning?" For example, what is holding on to what is good? In our city who don't have enough water chlorine and who can't afford to pay their gas bills. Do you have love that matter to you? I know we are impatient with government programs that have a lot of waste to them, that have a lot of spending. But we have a lot of corruption and maybe some people seem to be underwriting. But aside from your impatience with those programs, how do matter to us that people are cold--or hungry--or shelterless? Well, St. Paul says, "I have held fast to what is good." And maybe if we Christians had held fast to that particular blanket, the government never would have needed to step in.

Well, there are a lot of things we Christians need to hold fast to. We need a little complex when it comes to the forgiveness of our sins, when it comes to our growth in spiritual maturity, when it comes to holding on to the Bible, when it comes to holding on to eternal life. But we also need to hold on to what is good by loving one another.

Central Presbyterian has a reputation in this city and across our denomination for being a great evangelistic church that shares the Bible's best news, which is the spiritual life eternally. Now the time has come for us to be spiritual well-know for taking seriously what the Bible has to say about our duty to our fellow man. It is time for us to develop a lines complex about holding on to the good in our love for one another. It is time for us to show the world how much we care.