

Romans 8

Sunday 12/21/2008

SEC: Introduction to Romans 8 and the Rapture

We are not a traditional church, and that is an understatement. We always want to go after the truth of things and look at things from a biblical standpoint and try to make the applications. You remember last week that before we got into Romans chapter 8, I laid out the great doctrine of the rapture of the church. I showed you how it was absolutely necessary that before you ever grasped the great material in Romans chapter 8, you have some kind of framework to put it in.

The doctrine of the rapture of the church is a doctrine that is not taught today by many churches and many Bible teachers. Last week, there were a number of great lessons in that material, but one of them was the fact that you realize that when you lose your Bible, you lose the Holy Spirit of God showing you and giving you the revelation of the Word of God of different truths in the Bible.

In fact, we talked about it. I gave you a great verse, and it ought to be a verse that you put into your Bible and your daily work. It was over there in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 13, where it says:

1 Thessalonians 2:13

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

We talked about how the Bible is the only book in the world that your attitude about it determines what you get out of it. I showed you last week that without the concept of the rapture, there is really no meaning or understanding to Romans chapter 8, and that is why we had to grasp that concept first.

The theme of Romans chapter 8 is really the death of the Christian in relationship to future events, and in reality, the redemption of your body. You are probably asking yourself, "How does this fit in with a Christmas message?" I will explain that in here just a little bit and how it is going to work.

I. The Structure of Romans 8

I want to give you a breakdown of Romans chapter 8 to help you put it in perspective because there is a lot of material here. I would suggest that in this particular scenario, what you do is this: if you would look at my Bible, you would find that the book of Romans was such a book that I had to get down that almost every verse is bracketed. Around those brackets, there may be a one-line sentence or a one-line deal, whatever it may be, that will explain to you what that particular verse is dealing with. It helps you when you come to the book of Romans; it helps you figure it out.

You are going to find that Romans 8 breaks down into four sections. We definitely want to get these four sections in your Bible and in your mind now as we come through each section. Even though it breaks down into four sections, all four sections are themed around one concept, and that concept is adoption. In fact, there are two adoptions in Romans chapter 8, and understanding Romans chapter 8 is crucial in understanding the concept of these two adoptions.

Remember I said last week, and I was kind of playing with you a little bit and just kind of didn't want to confuse you, but I told you that if you are saved here this morning, there has been a time in your life where you have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior, and I used the phrase that in reality, you are only half saved. I didn't want that to scare anybody because you get young Christians sometimes that they only hear part of it or they don't understand it, but I explained it by this: if you are saved this morning, what is saved about you is your soul. Your body is not yet saved.

We have been studying all through Romans chapter 5, Romans chapter 6, and Romans chapter 7 about the battle that we have between our old nature and our new nature. Your new nature is your soul; that is what is saved. Your old nature is your flesh; that is not saved. That is why we have such a struggle with it. Romans chapter 8 shows you how your soul was adopted the day you got saved, and then it focuses on the future event, which is when your body and my body are going to be redeemed also and adopted when we get the glorious body of Christ.

Remember last week when we came through the rapture, I ran you to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and I showed you all the verses in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, and we looked at all of these different aspects of how that is going to take place. So, as I lay this out this morning in our intro here, you want to at some point get these four sections in your Bible and then kind of break it down from there and see how it works.

II. The Gift of Romans 8: A New Year's Perspective

Now, let me bring this back to our Christmas message today. I cannot think of a better gift I could give you as a church than a gift that would absolutely guarantee if you do not take it back. A gift is only good if you keep it. You all get gifts we do not necessarily like or that do not fit, or whatever the case, and somebody says, "If you do not like it, you can take it back." That is true of the gift that God has for you today under this message, because if you do not like it, you can always give it back.

But obviously, in our lives and your life and my life, when we come down to this time of the year and we look at the last year, you realize that in the counseling world, the most oppressive time, and the time that when I was running a counseling ministry, the time that the appointments would just go off the wall, was right after Christmas and right after New Year's. They will tell you that that is the most depressing time of the year.

There are a couple of reasons for it. One of the reasons is a no-brainer, and that is because your charge card bills come in, and that in itself is enough to depress you. But along with that, you find that there is something about us as human beings that when we come down to the end of something, we always get reflective. When somebody is in the hospital, and it looks like maybe

they are an elderly person, or maybe they have been hurt in a car wreck, and it looks like maybe they will not make it, or they are having a very iffy situation, or maybe the doctor says that they have a terminal disease and they are going to die and they only have a short period of time, the first thing when you are faced with that reality is that it puts you in a mood of reflection. You leave the hospital, and all you do is think about where you were in life with them at certain points in time.

That is the way God made us, and that is why at the end of every year, when we come to face the beginning of the new year, we as human beings look back and we become reflective. We look back at maybe some of the bad times. We look back and think of the good times. We look back and think of maybe the people that God connected us with, or in some cases, unconnected us with. I do not care if your year has been good or your year has been bad. When we come to this point in time every year, we look back with a reflection on where we have been, and you think about those kinds of things.

The goal of everybody in life is not to be miserable. I have never met anybody in my life, in all the years in ministry, whose goal in life was self-destruction. Now, they may get to that point in their life at some point, but they did not start out that way. Everything in life that we face today has got a positive, smiley face put on it. We want to have the illusion that next year is going to be better than last year. That is why I said earlier that for time and eternity around New Year's, we all make our New Year's resolutions, things that we are going to do differently this year than we did not do last year. Truly, as far as God's people are concerned, most do not need a resolution; you need a revolution. You need to overthrow the present government living inside you and turn it over to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to give you a gift this morning, and I am sorry it is not out of Luke chapter 2 or Matthew chapter 2 or 3 or 4, where it talks about Christ being born and the wise men showing up and the star of Bethlehem. That is all good stuff. I am sure by next Thursday, you will have your fill of that through watching TV and whatever you do, and wherever you go, you will hear it all the time. You cannot drive down the street without seeing a church that has a live nativity out there, and you get your fill of that. When you stop and think about that, other than the fleeting moment that you think about Christ being born, by the time you get into the new year, you are gone with that, and nothing ever really changes.

I want to take you to Romans 8 today, and I did not plan this. It was just one of these things that God, in the process by which we are moving through Romans, just fit naturally in where we are at today. It was not something by design, not by me anyhow. But I want you to have, and I think you want to have, a long life. I know the Bible says to die is gain, and we are to set our affections on things above. I know that, but it is like somebody said one time, he was a Christian guy, he says, "It is not that I do not want to die because I know I am going to heaven; I do not want to go through the process to get there because death can be a hard thing sometimes."

Is there anybody here that does not say, "I would like to have a long life"? Obviously, that is what the world wants. Is there anybody here that would say, "I do not want to be happy in life"? Is there anybody here that would say, "I really do not want to be fulfilled in my life; I want to go

around with that empty feeling inside me"? Is there anybody here that would say, "I do not want to be productive in life"? Is there anybody in society today that would actually say, "You know what, I really do not want to be satisfied"? The truth of the matter is, everything that gets us in trouble in life, saved or unsaved, everything that gets us in trouble in life, is because we have those things. Every one of them: we want to live long, we want to be happy, we want to be fulfilled, we want to be productive, we want to be satisfied, we want to have a good life. Everything we endeavor to do in our lives is because we think if I do that, if I get this, if I accomplish this, if I get her, if I get him, if I get this job, if I win the lottery, I belong to the Lord.

This is a true story: I had a Baptist preacher friend of mine. He used to wail and wail and wail on gambling and all that stuff. He just preached on the lottery every day, every Sunday. It was big in their state, and he just put it out, and he would beat his people up. You know how God has a sense of humor? A woman in his church won the lottery, got 68 million dollars when it was all said and done. Now he is faced with a dilemma. You obviously know what that dilemma is. It is amazing how we change our perspective on things when it becomes to our advantage. Where once it was "that is of the devil," and "boy, you do that," when you win it, it is, "Well, the devil is going your way, right? I would rather have that money come into God's work than go out there in the world."

You see, we all want to be happy. We all want to be fulfilled. We all want to be satisfied. We all want to be productive. Romans chapter 8, in the first section we are going to look at here in just a second, has some of the greatest practical material you will ever find in life. I do not think there is any other place in the Bible that I know of where it is all collectively put in one form that you have the formula for a long and a happy and a fulfilled and a productive and a satisfying life. I would be hard-pressed to find another place in the Bible that had all of the material so collectively put in form.

I think in light of what we are going to do New Year's Eve, and we have had a lot of you people that have really plugged into the Bible, you are really beginning to build a relationship with God. You have overcome a lot of the initial things that you had to deal with, and it is time for us to focus inwardly now. I think that this message, in light of what we are going to do not this Thursday night but next Thursday night in the aspect of Song of Solomon, will take many of you and really give you that edge on next year that you can start 2009. If you keep this gift you have today, if you do not say, "It does not fit me, I am going to take it back," or "No thanks, I do not want it," but if you accept the gift that God has for you today in Romans chapter 8 in this first section and apply it to your life and let that be the catalyst by which you move into the Song of Solomon next week, we will leave no stone unturned as far as you leaving here with a new year in your mind and your heart, knowing exactly how God looks at you, what He thinks of you, how He looks at you every day of your life, and then what you are supposed to think and look back at Him every day of your life. Of course, that is where we are at.

III. The Four Sections of Romans 8 Explained

Now, let me give you these four sections:

1. Section 1:Romans 8:1-14. This is where we are going to find our message today, with some of the most absolutely incredible practical principles for the victorious Christian life. You want a long life? It is in here. You want a happy life? It is in here. You want a life of fulfillment? It is in this passage. You want a productive life and a life that satisfies? Here is where it is at.
2. Section 2:Romans 8:15-22. This is where we find our first spiritual adoption. We will talk about this next week. This is the adoption of your soul the day you got saved.
3. Section 3:Romans 8:23-32. This is where we will find the second adoption, and this will be the adoption of your body, the physical redemption of your body through the rapture of the church, which we talked about in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 last week.
4. Section 4:Romans 8:33-39. This will deal with the end result, the total victory. You will have a better understanding of once you are a child of God, and you understand what has transpired in your life, you will understand why the victory in your life is the child of God: the long life, the happiness, the fulfillment, the productivity, and being satisfied. If you do not have those after running Romans chapter 8, there is something seriously wrong, and you are not hooked up right. The truth of the matter is, the reality of the victorious Christian life really rests—and we are not going to get into it today, but you will see it when we get there—it really rests on verses 33 through 39 and your understanding of it because it forms the right attitude of heart that puts it all into perspective.

IV. The Gift of Romans 8: Living the Victorious Life

Now, let us look at verses 1 through 14. Let us look at the gift that God has for you today that is better than any gift I could give you if I went back to Luke and Matthew and told you the Christmas story, got you a nice warm, bubbly feeling inside, and you could go back and you could think about the little baby back there in a manger and all of those things, and all that nice warm, fuzzy stuff that I am not against at all. But the reality is, life is a lot tougher than that, and the reality is, I want you to have a long life, a happy life, a fulfilled life, a productive life, and a satisfied life.

So, let us begin reading Romans chapter 8. We will read the first 14 verses, and then we will come back and we will make comment on them. It says:

Romans 8:1-14

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Now, Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You. Thank You for those that are here today. We pray, Father, that the Word of God will go out and touch somebody's life today. Lord, we are not here to give nice warm, fuzzy feelings. We are not here, Lord, to necessarily make everybody feel good. We are here, Lord, because the Bible contains truth, and the truth of the matter is, if we want to have a successful year next year, we want to have those things that we all want to have, then there are going to have to be some things in our lives that we understand. Help us today. Help us to take this first section and lay it out and put it into perspective, and Lord, help me to lay it out the way You would have me to lay it out. Forgive us where we have failed You. Put us under the blood, and Lord, we pray that we might receive and might give the Bible today in a fashion that would be pleasing to You, and we thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen.

V. Understanding Condemnation (Romans 8:1)

Again, in my Bible, not only will you have the four sections, but I suggest that because I am basically going to come down through this verse by verse. This is what you call expository preaching. In many cases, it is suppository preaching, but that is okay. We are going to take these verses verse by verse. In my Bible, if you look at it—and you can if you want, for \$25 a pop—you will see that Romans for me was such a hard book to grasp because I am not a very bright guy. I had to almost break it down with a little bracket and a little one-line meaning after every verse so I would see it and read it because I cannot remember it. I suggest that you do that too if

you really want to learn the book of Romans. You do not have to try to do it today. I would get the tape, and it takes some time and takes some work to go down and through it.

Verse 1 is the first verse we want to look at here, and it is a great verse. It says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The key word here is the word "condemnation." We talked about this earlier, and you need to understand that a Christian can be condemned. Now, listen very carefully: a Christian can be condemned and he can be damned and yet never die and go to hell. The reason for that is because in the Bible, there are two kinds of condemnation and there are two kinds of damnation. There is a damnation of your soul, which is when an unsaved man or woman dies and spends an eternity in the lake of fire. But for a believer who walks not after the Spirit but walks after the flesh, there is a physical condemnation or a damnation.

Remember the story in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, where Paul was dealing with a church at Corinth, and they had a man there in that church that was in sin and would not repent? Remember the advice he gave that church? He said:

1 Corinthians 5:5

To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

That seems like a very harsh thing for a pastor to say about a person in his church, but if you pastor a while, there is a lot of that you would like to turn over to Satan at some point in your life; you just cannot always do it. Anyway, Paul, the greatest Christian that probably ever lived, was giving advice to a church about a man who would not do what is right in the face of his sin. He said, "Turn him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord."

Basically, he is saying, "He will not do what is right. Turn him over to the devil as far as the flesh is concerned. Let him live his riotous lifestyle. Cut ties with him. Tell him that if the devil tests him so well and takes care of him, then go serve the devil." In the process, the devil will not do him any favors and will destroy and damn and condemn his flesh. When he does that, that may be the only hope you have of getting him back and dealing with him once the devil takes him down the road.

It is like the prodigal son in the Gospels. He left his father, took his inheritance, and he went out there. What brought him back? I will tell you what brought him back: he got tired of eating the swine's pig food. He got tired of sleeping with the pigs. He got tired of laying in the mud. He got tired of eating out of the same husk that the swine ate out of. He just found out that when he was going down that road, leaving his father's house, I am sure he had glamorous visions of Las Vegas, glittery lights, party time, Playboy style, and getting a big yacht and all these things. It wound up in a pigpen in the mud, sleeping there with the pigs and eating what they ate. It took the destruction of his flesh to a certain degree for him to wake up and come to himself. I love the verse; the Bible says, "And he came to himself." You know what that means? In the Greek, it means he came to himself. He woke up one morning and said, "Man, I am hungry." He woke up

one morning, and he thought of a dream, and he thought he was with Miss Playmate, and he had his arms around her, and he was holding her and stroking her, and he looked up and opened his eyes, and it was a 500-pound sow pig. In his dream, he said, "I love you," and he got back pig lips. He woke up one day and the Bible says he came to himself. You know what the end of the year is about? Really, in a reflective mood, you and I come to ourselves. That is all it is.

In his case, he was honest enough. Once he came to himself, he went back where he needed to get back. I have met a lot of God's people that when they come to themselves, they really do not come to themselves; they just blame somebody else for their problems and have more problems. But the verse says in verse 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation" if you walk after the Spirit of God. That is where you have the longevity, the happiness, the fulfillment. But when you walk after the flesh, then there is a condemnation physically, not of your soul, but of your body.

A couple of weeks ago, I preached a message that probably was one of the greatest messages you will ever get, not because it came from me, but because of the content. It talked about the bad choices we make in life. It is an incredible outline that God used that morning, and bad choices will lead to the pigpens, just as simple as that. I had a man say to me one time, "Have you ever noticed how people equate things and they say things, but they really do not understand what they are really saying and how it impacts the truth of life? They kind of just get a glimpse of it." I had a man say, "I think your hell is on earth," one time, and I thought to myself, "You know what? For a Christian, it is." You realize that if you are saved this morning, this earth is as close as you are ever going to get to hell. You realize that if you are an unsaved person this morning, this earth is as close as you are ever going to get to heaven.

Somebody says, "Well, I think you make your own hell on earth." You are right if you are a Christian. I have seen some of God's people go through stuff that they said, "Bob, I am just in hell." I said, "No, no, you are not. You are not suffering. You are a Christian, aren't you?" "Yeah, I am." "You are not suffering." He said, "But it is so hard. I cannot go through it. It is just really rough." I said, "What you are suffering is a physical condemnation and a physical damnation because you have walked after the flesh, not after the Spirit." We as God's people, we make our own hell here. God never intended it for us. God wants your life and my life to be happy. He wants it to be fulfilled. He wants it to be productive. He wants us to be satisfied. He wants us to experience the joy. But as a child of God, you are never going to hell spiritually, but boy, you can spend some time in it on this planet physically, and it can be rough. It can be rough.

VI. The Law of the Spirit of Life (Romans 8:2)

Now, look at verse 2: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." So far in Romans, and this is where Romans gets confusing, I do not know if you are keeping count or not, but we have come up against three or four different laws here, and none of them are the same. When you start reading all these laws in Romans, if you do not keep it straight and understand what they are, you know, we have an Old Testament Mosaic Law that he talked about in Romans chapter 7. He has a law of sin and death that he talked about in Romans chapter 8, verse 2. He has a law of your mind that he talked about in chapter 7, verse 23, and a law at war in your members, also in chapter 7, verse 23. And now in 8:2, a law of the Spirit

of life. That is five different laws that he is talking about, and in time, as you put all this stuff together, you will learn how to see what those are.

This law of the Spirit of life is an absolute law that takes place the day you and I get saved. You have three parts to it:

5. The new birth. We know all about that; we have studied it for weeks now.
6. The baptism of the Holy Ghost. We have talked about that.
7. Spiritual circumcision. We have laid that out, and we have talked about that.

Those three parts make up the automatic law, which is called the law of the Spirit of life. It is an automatic law that goes into effect the day you got saved. Most laws that God makes are automatic. The day you become past the point of accountability and you choose to disobey God's law, it is an automatic law that you become dead in trespasses and sins. The day you trust Christ as your own personal Savior, an automatic law goes into effect: the law that he was talking about here, the law of life in Christ Jesus. They are automatic. This law frees you and me from the law of sin and death brought on us by the Old Testament Mosaic Law that we could not keep. Now you are free from the flesh on the inside, and now you have the ability to walk in the newness of life. But the law of sin and death, your flesh, is still present, and we deal with it. This is why I gave you a key phrase a couple of weeks ago, and I told you how important it was to get it in your mind: before you are saved, your soul is stuck to your flesh. Once you get saved, God separates, under the law here, He separates your flesh from your spirit or your soul, and now you are not stuck to it anymore, but you are still stuck with it. This is where the battle comes in of Paul in Romans 7 and other places, where you and I, this is what he is talking about in chapter 8, verse 1, where he is telling us to not walk after the flesh but walk after the Spirit.

VII. The Weakness of the Law and the Power of Christ (Romans 8:3-5)

Now, look at verses 3, 4, and 5: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." You want to mark that word "mind" there; we are going to come back to it in a second.

This is a great passage for a number of reasons. One of the aspects of it that is incredible is that this passage shows the weakness of the law. When it says down here, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," let me tell you what he is meaning there. You want to get this understanding: in the Old Testament law, it had to be kept by the men themselves, men in flesh and blood bodies. In the Old Testament law, when you did something under the Old Testament, if you broke the law, then you as a man or a woman had to go get a sacrifice, pay the money for that sacrifice, take it to that priest, and give it to him, and he would take that and make the sacrifice for you. That is why the Bible says the sacrifices of the law through the flesh, you doing it yourself, it was weak. The law could not do it.

You know what the law is like in the Old Testament? The law is like driving down the freeway and seeing a speed limit sign that says 55 miles an hour. The law will reveal to you and me what the speed limit is so we can stay within the law. That is what the law does; it reveals to me what the standard is. But the law does not have the ability to pay my ticket if I break the law and get caught. The law has the ability to show you and I where we are wrong, but it does not have the ability to fix us when we break it. That is where it was weak. That is why the Bible says back in Hebrews, and you want to probably put this verse in along here, Hebrews chapter 10, verse 4. He is saying:

Hebrews 10:4

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

That is what they did in the Old Testament. When a man broke the law, he brought a turtledove, a pigeon, depending on what his monetary situation was, or he brought a bull, or he brought a goat, or he brought a lamb, and they shed that innocent blood. The Bible says that that was them in the flesh actually bringing something to them to fix their sin problem, and the Bible says that those offerings were weak through the law. Why? Because they could not pay for the sin; they could not take away the sin. That is where the law was weak. That is what he is saying here.

The great thing about Christ in verse 4 is that God kept the law for me. Somebody would say to me, "Bob, what is the greatest thing that Christ accomplished on Calvary?" The greatest thing that He accomplished was the fact that where the law was weak, God's Son was strong. Where the law could not pay my sin debt, only could expose my sin debt, Christ could pay my sin debt. He paid my speeding ticket and then for Christmas gave me a radar detector so I would not get any more. You are laughing. Was that joyous to you? Did you think that is not true? Did you think that was one of Bob's little moments? No, He paid it and gave me a radar detector.

How does your radar detector work, the one that you say you do not have? Did you try to explain to the highway patrolman that it was a GPS, and he said, "We will not need it anymore because I am going to GPS you to jail. Come on with me." What it does, you put it in, you plug it in, and it has internal things in it that pick up signals from the radar with a guy down the road waiting for you. When I was growing up, we did not have that; we used to put tin foil in our hubcaps. Well, that is what the Bible does. Once you get saved, He pays the sin debt, then He says, "Here, let me give you a detector that will show you long before." Some of these detectors, they say, "It will pick up." I had one once that picked up everything. I mean, I would. Somebody said, "Here, take this to Ohio; you will get there faster." It beeped the whole time. I was down to 20 miles an hour. I never could figure it out. But inside, it is supposed to have the technology that picks up what is out there that is going to get you. Well, that is what God gave you here. He gave you a radar detector, and it is a good radar detector. It shows you what is coming your way before you get there and how you can avoid it. That is what the Word of God does. That is what Christ did.

He looked at, He said down here in verse 4, "God kept the law from us and fulfilled it." Look what He says: "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." Not to us, in us. The moment the Holy Spirit of God came inside you, He fulfilled that law, and He did it for you and for me.

Then look down here in verse 5: "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh." There is that word, and a reference you are going to see this a lot in this passage, and it is a reference to the mind. "Mind the things of the flesh." That is a great word. The battle today, in reality, when we talk about the flesh versus the Spirit, you know where that battle is? In reality, it is a battle in your mind. That is where it is at.

VIII. The Battle for the Mind

I have been accused all of my life of taking people in and brainwashing them. I had a lady one time; she said, "Well, you are just brainwashing my son. He does not want to go out and do all the things with his friends anymore. All he wants to do is sit around and read that Bible. You are brainwashing him." Well, I understand that, and this is why sometimes real Bible Christianity gets compared to a cult. I do not know how to tell you this, but that is exactly what God intends to do with you: brainwash you. He wants to get the wicked, evil, carnal thoughts out of your mind.

What did your mother used to say when you said your first swear word? You probably never said a swear word in your life; you are so sweet. Pam, tell us what your mother was saying. Okay, you can go now. I used it for my illustration. Thank you, thanks, John. What did your mother used to say, Scott? What did your mother say, Steve? What did your mother say all the time? In your case, what did your mother say when you said a bad word? What did she say? "I am going to..." All together now, in unison: "Wash your mouth out with soap!" Well, this is why I am such a slippery-tongued devil. Where did she get that? The Bible says, "The renewing of your mind," how? "By the washing of regeneration." Your mother had it half right. She wanted to wash your mouth out with soap, but that really will not fix the problem; it will just give you a nice, clean, soapy breath. But that will not fix the problem. What really needs to be washed is not your mouth, but the mind that put those words in your mouth to begin with.

You know why the Marines are always called such tough guys? John was in the Marines; maybe somebody else was in the Marines. But have you ever had an experience of going to boot camp at Camp Lejeune or one of those places where the Marines do them? You know what they do, and the Army does it too? What they do is they completely take from you who you are. They shave your hair; it is all look-alike. You do not have a name anymore unless he gives you a pet name, and I cannot even tell you what some of those are. You are just like everybody else; you are nothing, you are nobody. They take completely from you everything you are because their job is to make you into something that you are not at that point, and that is the United States Marine, the toughest guys in the world. Probably so, the men and the women who wear that uniform and wear that globe and anchor go back way before World War I, where they fought some of the most desperate battles and stood the line and held the line that we have ever seen in history, and they are quite incredible.

But you know what? They did not get there just by putting on a uniform. Have you ever noticed or watched the war movies where, I mean, when you are done and you come out of boot camp as a Marine, you think that one person, you can lick the whole world, and they instill that in you. You know that you are down in there, and they take everything from you, and then they build

you back exactly. You know what they do? They brainwash you. They take you from Joe the civilian to Joe the U.S. Marine, and they build into you the confidence, the mindset, a camaraderie. You know what their motto is? It is Semper Fidelis. You know what Semper Fidelis means? "Always faithful." That is their creed. That is their mode. That is the way they do it.

How do they do that? By brainwashing you. How do they get Joe Schmoe to be a guy that will take on a whole onslaught of enemy and just do what he does? How do they get that guy to, when he is in a foxhole with eight or nine other guys and somebody throws a grenade, he chooses to jump on that grenade to kill himself to save his face? There are people in this church that would not walk across the street if somebody fell down. How did they get them that way? Well, there is a process. They get them to think that they are better and more elite than anybody else in the whole wide world. They sing goofy songs whenever they run, whenever they march. They go out on the street, and they all go in unison. They all sing the same thing. Why? Because they all want to be taught and trained the same way. They sing the same things. They eat the same things. They all look alike the same way because they want to project and bring out of them a oneness and a unity. So they run down the road singing things like, "Napalm, napalm sticks like glue, get it on the mamas and the children too." And that is where they go. "See up in the morning with the rising sun, gonna run all day till the work is done." All right, off they go.

Now, that sounds pretty goofy to me and you, but then you are not going to have to take a beating someday or be in a foxhole when it is freezing or stand alone in the face of a whole banzai charge coming your way. No, no, no, no. We will tuck the covers in tonight, and the closest thing we will ever get to is watching it on TV. But I am saying is this: what is wrong with you and me? Here is the fact that yes, in the biblical sense of the word, and everything that you find in the Bible, that is what is wrong. We need to have our minds washed out, our brains, if you please, washed from the filth and the ungodliness of this world. He talks about the washing of regeneration by the Word. He talks about renewing your mind. He talks about us not to mind the things of the flesh. Truly, the battle for you and for me is the battle for the mind, and of course, that is where it is at.

Remember I told you that life is about choices, and you are what you think about, and it is incredible what we do. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 10, verses 5 and 6, that we are to:

2 Corinthians 10:5-6

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

You know what that is? That is washing out what you have in here and putting something else in. That is the process. Why? Because verse 6 says: "For to be carnally minded is death." That is physical condemnation. "But to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

IX. Carnal Mind vs. Spiritual Mind (Romans 8:6)

This is one of the terrible concepts in all the Bible, yet it is so true. Now, I am not one who believes in Calvinism or predestination in any form of the concept that is being taught today, but I do believe that the Bible there is such a thing called foreknowledge. Here is what I believe: I believe that God, the moment you get saved, has a plan for you. I believe that God always looks at us in the format of "we are going to do what is right." The reason I know that is because I see Israel, and I see God always looking at Israel and telling Israel what they could have, even when they have not got there to get it yet. In other words, I have never found a place, except after Israel really screws it up, where in the initial contact with God in Israel, He ever told them anything negative. He only told them all the good things that He wanted to do. It was their choices that canceled those great promises out.

I am telling you this, I guarantee you, when you got saved, God looks at you through the eyes of everything He wants you to accomplish. The Bible says in verse 6, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." I want you to know that I believe with everything that is in my power that you as a child of God, even though God has this tremendous plan for you, you can end your life early by the bad choices you make.

I look at a man who was the greatest Christian ever lived that God used, and yet because he made one bad choice of going down to Jerusalem, and God told him four times not to, the Apostle Paul, God cut his short ministry, and it automatically wound up to the end of his life, and he never fulfilled everything that maybe God would have fulfilled for him. While I do not believe, as I said, any form of Calvinism or predestination, I do believe that the Bible says in verse 6 that we are to be spiritually minded over carnally minded.

We have a guy right now that John and I are working with in the prison system, and I have known this guy for a long time. In fact, I won him to Christ. Here is a guy that when he was in prison, he was in for murder and everything else in the whole wide world. He was a drug dealer and the whole nine yards, and he got saved. In my life, there are people that got saved that I questioned whether they really got saved or not, but not in this guy's case. This guy got saved; his life completely changed around. I will never forget, he finally got out of prison about eight or nine years ago, and I told him, I said, "Look, you better find a church. You do not live in town here. You better find a church, and you better get a pastor and make yourself accountable, and you better make sure that you are at church every time the door opens, pal, because you are going to have a tendency to be drawn back into that stuff."

In prison, you could not really do anything wrong. Our material was coming in. John was talking with you on the phone. I was talking with you on the phone. We were helping you with all the things. There really was not a lot you could get into. It is easy to say, "I am going to serve God" when they lock you down 24 hours out of 24 and you cannot really get into any problems. But it is when you are back out. Six months after a while, I did not hear from him every week. I could tell right off the bat. I would call his mom, "Why have we not seen him?" He got into a situation in the town that he was living, and he had such a bad reputation that the police hated him, and rightly so. I mean, it was not like they said, "Oh, now he is saved, he is a good guy." No, they still remembered the old guy, and they were waiting for him. In fact, he claims he was set up. I have no doubt in my mind that he was not set up, no doubt in my mind.

Now he got thrown back in jail about eight years ago, and now he is trying to. It is very obvious. He has had two or three court-appointed lawyers. It is so obvious that they conspired. They did not bring in all the witnesses. They did not bring in every day. Now he is trying to get appeal after appeal after appeal to get a new trial. You know what they are doing? They are sandbagging him every way. They will get the material that he sends them. They know he is only got 30 days to get it in. They will send it back with only three days left. The whole system is against him. The prosecutor is against him. The judge is against him. The police officer is against him. They all got together and they said, "This guy is a bad guy, and we do not want him walking the streets anymore, and we are going to make sure we do whatever we have to do to make sure he never walks these daylight again." And they probably will do that.

He calls me up on the phone, and he complains about the system. Calls me up on the phone, and he complains about how unfair it is, and he says to me, "What do you think, Bob?" You know what my answer is to him? I said, "I think if you had been to church that night, we would not be having this conversation." That is what I think. I think if you had made the right choice after you saw the bad choices you made, if you had been in church that night, if you had been to Bible study that night, if you had been over at the pastor's house or somebody's house and they were discipling you, we would not be having this conversation. Because just like there is a law of gravity and a law of aerodynamics, there is a law of sin and death, and there is a law that says that if you do mind the things of the flesh, you are going to die.

I have had people in my ministry that used to come to this church and then went back to the world, and their whole idea was, "You know what? We came for a while and then went back to the world and doing the same thing." In multiple times in my life, they have been killed tragically, sometimes in a car accident. I had one person drowned, had several in car accidents, even had one in a plane crash. I think back of the times that they were in a church learning the Bible. In fact, I had one person that was actually killed on a Thursday night, and somebody called me the next morning because I did not know the news, and they said, "Did you hear that so-and-so was killed last night in a tragic accident?" I said, "No, I did not hear that." Their thing to me was, "What do you think about that?" My answer was this: "If she had been to Bible study last night, we probably would not have this conversation." Folks, there is a reality in life you better grasp, and the quicker you grasp it, the better off you are going to be. You want a joyous life? You want a fulfilled life? You want a happy life? You want to be productive in life? I am telling you, the carnal mind is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

I do not know what to tell you. I am 58 years old. My dad was 54 when he died, 55 when he died. When I turned 55, I thought about it, and I thought about my own life at 55, and I thought about what I have enjoyed at 55. But I thought to myself, "Man, I have two little grandkids. I want to see them graduate. I want to see them get married, and I will be in on that process of who they marry." Jack and William. Jack is marrying the oldest one, and now you are marrying the youngest one, all the rest of it. I am already putting little things in their little minds about it. But she said, "Grandpa, I am having a Big Mac attack." I said, "That is a Zach attack you are having." "Daddy, who was the greatest king of all time?" "It was William the Conqueror."

But I look back at my dad. He died when I was in my early 20s. When I reached 55, I really looked inside and I thought to myself what he must have thought. He never got to see his great-grandchildren. He never got to see what happened to me in my life or my sister. At 55 years of age, life was taken from him. I thought to myself, "I am 58. I have lived three years longer than my dad had lived." That is a strange feeling. It is strange to put yourself in that mindset, to be dead at 55. Yet my dad smoked four packs of cigarettes a day. He died of lung cancer. Would he have died of lung cancer without those cigarettes? Probably not. You see, he made a choice. You make choices. I make choices. Some of those choices will cut your life short. Some of those choices will put you in terrible situations. Some of those choices will destroy your liver.

Barbara and I, you know, back in Ohio, I knew a missionary, and I cannot think of his name right now. It was him and his wife; they were missionaries to Japan. He wound up leaving the ministry. Anyway, she was a real cute little gal; he was a tall guy. Remember who I am talking about? Danny somebody. Well, anyway, it is coming to me. I will call you tonight at midnight. All right, you are leaving your number; I will tell you his last name. Missionary to Japan. I remember at Christmas time, we had him in our Christmas missionary thing. Something happened; him and his wife got a divorce, and they found him in an empty New York hotel room. He died of AIDS. Do you think that was God's plan for him? No. You see, the foreknowledge of God, when you get saved, God looks at your life and my life, and He says, "This is what I have for you, and it is only the best." But when you walk after the flesh instead of after the Spirit, those things come into your life. This is a sobering time, but it is a time in your life when you better look back at last year and compare it to next year. The Bible says to be spiritually minded is life and peace; to be carnally minded is death. Spiritually minded: life and peace.

You know what? When you got saved, the Bible says, and we talked about this when we started Romans, we talked about the two concepts: peace with God, peace of God. When you got saved, you got peace with God. Peace with God in the Bible means that you have made your peace with God as a sinner, and now you have peace with God. But the other concept, peace of God, is different entirely. That is for a person after you are saved. You see, you made your peace with God when you got saved, but after you get saved, when you walk after the Spirit, you have the peace of God. That is the peace the Bible says passes all understanding. That is the peace that talks about in the book of Philippians, where he says in Philippians 4:7:

Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Notice the word "mind" there. There is the verse in Isaiah 26:3, which says:

Isaiah 26:3

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

You are going through some tough times right now. You are going through some hard times right now. Memorize those two verses. Get your mind stayed on Him. Why? Because the carnal mind will always lead you the wrong way. The spiritual mind is incredible.

X. The Cain Syndrome and Blaming God

I have dealt with people for many, many years, and I have seen this cycle. I call it the Cain syndrome. Why is it that when bad times come in our lives as a Christian, you know, the Bible says in the book of James, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." Why is it when bad times come in our lives that we make God our enemy? I have never fully understood that, other than that is one of the greatest telltale things that the person was not walking in the Spirit anyhow. It is an incredible thing. We cause the problems ourselves by making bad choices. When the consequences come, we blame God for it or get an attitude with God and get mad at God because we made the bad choices, and that is how we got here. I have never completely understood that.

But if you are going through bad times, and it is no fault of your own, maybe you just got saved, or you are coming to the place where you have lost your job or whatever, wherever you are at in your life, you have to come to the place where you cannot put God on a back burner till you get your problem fixed. You cannot say, "Oh, okay, God, I have all these things to do. I am going to put You over here till I get it fixed, and then I am going to bring You back in." You will never get there. That is an illusion. Because when you go through something by yourself—and we are all true to this—when you and I go through something by ourselves and we do not want to take the accountability for it, we are going to look for somebody else to blame. Every day of the week, 24/7, you know who is going to get that blame? It is going to be God. "God, I see a little baby die, and the parents say, 'Why did God do this?' I see a young teenager get killed in a car wreck, and the parents say, 'Why did God let this happen?'" Hey, it was not God's original plan that anybody ever died. Why do we always think it is God? I will tell you why: because that is the thought the devil puts in your mind.

I call it the Cain syndrome. Genesis chapter 4, the Bible says Cain and Abel. Cain brings the wrong sacrifice, and Abel brings the right sacrifice. The Bible says that God had respect unto Abel and not unto Cain. You know what Cain did? He got an attitude. The Bible says that God came out the same one day, and He says, "Cain, why has thy countenance fallen?" You know what that means? It means it went from this to that. "Why has thy countenance fallen?" He says, "Are you mad at Me because you brought the wrong offering, and I did not accept it when I accepted your brother's? Is that the issue?" Cain says, "Yeah, that is the issue." He says, "No problem. Go get the right offering, and I will accept it." You know what Cain did? He stayed mad. You see, the problem was not God in the way God dealt with it. The problem was that Cain made the wrong choice and did not want to reverse the wrong choice and wanted to blame God after he made the wrong choice. Do you ever read the end of the story and see how Cain worked out? The Bible says he left the presence of the Lord. That is where you are headed. That is exactly where you are headed. You will never fix your problem. I talked about a New Year's resolution to a New Year's revolution. You will never fix whatever problem you have till you get off the throne and put Him on.

XI. Giving and Trusting God

Now, I am going to say something, and I never preach about this, but I think you need to hear this. I never preach about giving. I never do. You cannot find one message in my back there of stuff that I ever preached about you giving. I could give a flip whether you give a dime or not. I really could. But the bottom line is this: some of you have got yourselves in a real financial mess. You know how you got there? You got there by not putting God first when you had the opportunity to do it. You got there because you thought 100 percent of your income would go a lot farther without God's blessing than 90 percent with God's blessing. That is what got you in the mess you are in, and you will never figure your problem out, and you will never get around that problem, and it is always going to be something else till you realize that God owns everything you have, and it is an illusion to think that you are in charge of anything.

I will tell you something, I could care less whether we keep this building or whether we do not. I was not looking for it when we got it; God gave it to me. I was just as happy where I was. You will never hear me get up and say to you guys, "You guys really need to start giving." I think it is an absolute insult for any pastor to get up in front of saved people and say, "Why are not you giving?" I think it is an absolute joke. I think it insults my intelligence. I am not telling you this because of the fact that the building is going to... that is not even the case. My point is this: this is your church. I did not decide to get this building. We sat down, and we said, "Hey, you know what? It is going to cost us this much amount of money. This is what we need to do." And everybody in this church except one person voted for it, and that is what we did. You will never hear me get up and say, "Hey, look, we are not meeting our bills this month." Never. You know why? To me, that is an insult, and we are making our bills, do not misunderstand me. I have given you my point of reference here. I will never do that. I think it is an insult to God.

If you are here this morning and you are His child, this is your home, and you are freeloading. May I use that word? I do not really care whether you can or not; I just did. You know what I will do? I will come up here some Sunday morning, and I will simply say this: "We are downsizing the ministry. God gave us this. We did not have up to the plate. Here is what we have to do. We are going to go back to a couple of options where we give up this 24/7, and we just rent the outside thing there because of the fact that two days a week, and we are working out with Larry." I do not care. I will come to the point where I have Chris write a letter to everybody in the church that feels to be a member of the church, and I say this: I know that there are some of you in here that are young people, young guys, only been here a short time, a year or so, and I am not even talking to you. But you know what? Tough economic times are coming, and I hear it all the time from my, from the good people. We have people that do not show up to work in the nursery on their scheduled time. You say, "Well, I had so many things." Did your phone break? You know what happens? Somebody else has to go in who worked their shift last week to cover your shift because you were so busy in life. It happens all the time.

Now, I do not care. I will teach the Bible just to hear myself because I am that good. We do not have to have a nursery. Find your own babysitter. "Well, I cannot come there so long." Sorry. I do not know what to tell you. We have it, and you do not take care of it. You think, "I will just go in, and somebody else can teach it." There is a responsibility here, but this is the fundamental problem that got us into problems in the first place. I will have Chris write a letter to everybody

that is a tithing member of this church: "Here is where we are meeting. Everybody else, go find somebody else to freeload off of. We do not have the room. We have to go back to my house. We have to go to somebody else's house. We cannot house 165 people. We are just going to have to take the ones who took the ministry serious."

You see, the concept is this, folks: it is those kinds of things that get you into problems every time because everything else comes first instead of God, including this church, including your responsibility. I am just telling you. Somebody says, "Well, I just..." And please get the right attitude about this. Do I think for a second that if you do not tithe, that the lights are going to go out in heaven next week? That the angels are going to run up to the throne, "Well, they did not tithe when we could have to keep the lights on. The angels are not going to eat." Come on, you know that giving has nothing to do with God. It is for your benefit, not for God. You know why? Because it teaches you a system and a format to put God first into your life with almost the number one thing we want to hoard. That is all it is. Hang on, you will be out of here in about 20 minutes, and then you can forget all about it. That is a law found all the way back in Malachi. That is a law. Somebody says, "Well, I cannot afford to give." You cannot afford not to. You know why? Because it sets the precedent in your life that no matter what, "I am going to trust God to get me through." This is a law, and that is where the basic fundamental break comes in, and you will never fix whatever problem you have till you get yourself off the throne and you start trusting Him no matter what situation you are in, and you put Him first and cut the attitude that He is to blame. How in the world, when you are discipling somebody, how in the world do you teach them to trust God when you cannot trust Him yourself?

XII. The Carnal Mind and Enmity Against God (Romans 8:7-8)

Look at verse 7: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." By choice, ladies and gentlemen, it is not subject to the book by choice. James chapter 4, verse 4 says:

James 4:4

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

That is one of the greatest reality checks in this world. You know what he just told you? He just gave you the defining verse on the word "enmity." The word "enmity" in the Bible means "enemy." That is a very sobering thought, is it not? If the Bible is right, ladies and gentlemen, and I have no doubt in my mind that it is, if the Bible is right, most of God's people, saved, are God's enemy. No wonder their life is in an arm-pit. No wonder they cannot get out of the hole they are in. Your adversary is not the devil. Your adversary is not the world. Your adversary is not the flesh. Your adversary is God, the One that saved you, because your carnal mind cannot line up with His holy mind, and you become enmity to God, which by the Bible's definition, you are now God's enemy while you are His child. Go figure that one out. You are trapped in Job chapter 9, verse 4, where it says:

Job 9:4

He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?

And you think you are the exception to the rule. I think I am the exception to the rule, and that is not true, ladies and gentlemen. You see, it is about the mind. It is about the mind. It is about letting this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus. It is about the mind getting the mind washed out, not making God your enemy when your world comes apart because of the bad choices we made. Draw nigh to God. Put God into it. Use the principles of God. No matter what happens, keep God first in your life and give God what is His.

Look at verse 8, a very simple verse: "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." I told you this thing was packed with practical applications. It is the greatest single place where it all is found in one bunch. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. You know what the Christian battle is? The Bible says it is the world (James 4:4), the flesh (Romans 8:1), the devil (1 Peter 5:8). But the reality of that is, and all that is true, but in your life, in my life, let me tell you something: you and I do not have to worry about the world. I will tell you something else: you and I certainly do not have to worry about the devil. I will tell you the biggest thing that slows us up: we do the best job. We give the devil and the world more free time to be working on other people in all the wide world than anybody in the world. You know why? Because God's people, the thing that messes us up is our flesh. It is our flesh.

You know, your flesh is based on your senses. The new buzzword all around sexual contact is the word "sensual." "Sensual" comes from the word "senses." Our senses are what our flesh sees, what our flesh touches, what our flesh smells, what our flesh hears, what our flesh feels. In the Bible, this is called walking by sight, not by faith. 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 7 says:

2 Corinthians 5:7

For we walk by faith, not by sight:

Ladies and gentlemen, if you are a saved person here today, I am just telling you, you want some great advice for the New Year? You want some really good advice for the New Year? You want to get a revolution going in your life? You dethrone who is running it right now and put Him on the throne. You make up your mind that this year you are going to be out of control. I saw driving down the road the other day, and I looked at a goofy car in front of me, and the bumper sticker in the back said, "God is my co-pilot." I drove up alongside, looked over at the specimen driving, and I thought, "There was always guaranteed." God is not a co-pilot. God does not want to be your co-pilot; He wants to be the pilot. He does not want to be somebody you order around. He wants you to follow the commandments that He has given you. He wants you to wash your mind out. He wants you to put the principles in. He wants you to realize that He has something for you, that the day you got saved, He had everything planned out for you. You and I cut it short. You and I cut it short. We are the ones that ruin our lives, ruin our ministry, losing the opportunity to lose so much time. You and me.

So, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. If you ever stop and wonder how you do please God, it all goes back to that same contact, Hebrews chapter 11, verse 6:

Hebrews 11:6

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

It takes faith. You cannot claim to have faith in God and not trust God in everything you do in life. You cannot say, "I walk by faith and not by sight" when you are looking over your shoulder every five minutes to wonder what your next move is going to be. You cannot say, "I walk by faith and I walk by sight" when you have that thing, and God is the farthest thing put out of your world, and you just get your own problem fixed first, and then you bring God back into the equation. That is not walking by faith or not by sight. All through my life, I have seen people do that. I have seen people forget about God, and the first thing that comes down there, they blame God. They get an attitude toward God. They think that God, "Why would You do this?" God did not do a thing. God wants you to have a fulfilled, loving, long, joyful, productive life, and He wrote you the book to show you how to have it. It is our choices. It is our choices. You cannot blame God for that, and sooner or later, you are going to have to trust Him. Sooner or later, you are going to have to put it in His hands.

XIII. Living by the Spirit (Romans 8:9-14)

Now, look at verses 9, 10, 11, 12. We will look at these collectively. It says, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

You know what the bottom line is to this whole thing? You just have to put out of the few other things you want to put, but you have to get, you want to understand this passage, just put one little comment next to it: the bottom line is this, if you are saved, you should live like it. It is that simple. If you are saved, then you should live like it. If you are saved, then you ought to put God number one in your life. Everything else comes in second. That is the way it is.

William and I were talking this last week, and William asked me a great question that so many young Christians ask me. William is an active young guy, and he does a lot of things, but he loves God, he loves the Word of God. He asked me this week, if you do not mind me telling this little story, he asked me this week how to really balance your life for God. He said, "I have this, this, this, this." He says, "Tell me, how do you really balance your life for God?" The question kind of caught me off guard for a minute because I was going to give him my standard answer, which is right, but I thought the thing through, and the way he asked it, and knowing his world and his life the way I do, I told him this: "You know what, William, you do have to

balance your life. You have to get everything in its appropriate place where everything gets balanced out with time: your job, your music, this, that, all these things. But," I said, "in reality, within that balance—and I am not sure I can tell you how to do this, I am just telling you, you have to figure out a way to do this—in reality, everything is in one pile, and God is over here, and He is number one."

Joe asked a good question about two Thursday nights ago. I remember we started coming through 1 Corinthians 7 about the marriage deal, and we talked about it. We got through some of them, and we are going to finish them up Thursday night, but the weather was bad, so I told him that we would wait. Joe was not here, and we are going to wait and do it after New Year's. But one of the things that he says in there, and I thought about this when you asked me that, one of the things that he says in there about people who are married, he basically says, "If you are married, if you are a husband and you have a wife, you ought to live your life like you have no wife at all." That is a strange thought. What does that mean? Does that mean I just get married, then tell my wife, "Well, sorry, honey, I am not married. I am going out to serve Jesus"? That is not what he is talking about. He says, "Them that have wives, as though they had none." Does that mean you just, you know, get married and then you say, "Well, the ministry is first. Sorry, sweetheart, I cannot be home tonight," and you know, you take the kids here, you do this. "I am thinking I have to unstop deaf ears, give eyesight back to the blind, raise dead people, and all these things. I cannot be there." That is not what he is talking about.

You know what happens to so many young married couples? When they get married, they do not understand the concept of marriage anyhow. Do you ever look at the concept of marriage? The Bible says two people—read it in Ephesians sometime, Ephesians 5. After you get married, when you get married, and the day you get married, what you want to spend time with is Ephesians chapter 5, which is all the blessing that is marriage. After six months, you move over to Ephesians 6, which is the battle of the warfare. See, that is where it comes in. I have seen some marriages I presided over. Instead of them singing those songs, I think they ought to sing, "The fight is on." That would be much more appropriate.

But you know what it says? Here is the thing: you have a man, you have a woman, and the Bible says when those two get married, those two become one. How in the world, if marriage is two people, how in the world when two become one can you have a marriage? Because it takes two to have a marriage. That is because the second person of that marriage is made up in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, and so when he is talking about even those that are married or have wives that they have none, he is talking in that sense because many, many people who get married, they get too married. They think it is about them. They do not understand that the reason they got married was that together they could serve God. What happens is, the reason they get married is so they can have all of their life together, and they forget God. It is the same thing in every area. The number one thing in our world that we have a problem with as human beings, and this is why this is such a good Christmas message, is it is "me first and God second." You have got to get around that. You have got to realize that that is not going to work if you want to have a healthy life and a great life and a long life and all of the things and the benefits of life and a fulfilled life and all those things. It only comes because you have the blessings of God in your

life, because "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that walk after the Spirit, not after the flesh." That is simple.

Then we find another great word; that word is "mortify." He says in here, the bottom line is, if you are saved, you should live like it. That is very simple, very easy. Personally, in my own personal life, knowing what I know about the world and life and the way it is out there, I think there are very few people today that really have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior. We have people come into this church, and they last for about six months. You know, they get saved. Some of you begin to work with them, and then you just see them right back to the world. Somebody says, "Are they saved?" Well, obviously, I cannot look in anybody's heart. I go by the Bible. The Bible says, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). All I have to do is go by the Word of God. You take a young guy or a young gal or somebody that comes in five or six times in two years and keeps going back out to the world and keeps going back into the thing and keeps making the bad choices, and you look at that and you say to myself, "I thought the Bible said, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' What happened? What happened to the old thing passing away? What happened? How can a man be saved and go back to the world and not even feel bad about it for a second?"

Here is the answer to that: we like to lie a lot in our lives today. We lie about everything. We lie to God. We lie to our friends. We lie to this. We lie to that. Most importantly, we lie to ourselves. We tell ourselves everything is okay when it is not. We tell ourselves, "You do not need to get Bob involved in this; I can handle it," when you cannot. You say to yourself, "Well, I do not need to take this to God; I can deal with it," when you cannot. What happens is, you wind up lying to yourself, and then you deceive yourselves. People who lie a lot have one real problem that manifests itself over time, and maybe you have never dealt with habitual liars, but I have, and they come to the point where you can never tell when they are telling you the truth. You know why that is? Because they do not know when they are telling the truth. They have deceived themselves for so long with so much, and when it comes to salvation, they have lied to themselves about everything else in life. What makes you think they are finally going to get a reality here? That is why they make a profession, they come for a while, and then they blow right back into the world. In reality, nothing really changed.

That is what happens. The Bible says if you are a saved man or a woman, if you are a person who would really, your life will change. If you want to live, you want to have a long life, and you want to have everything that God wants, you have to subdue your flesh by bringing it into subjection. You do not owe your flesh anything. I do not owe my flesh. It is a source of all our problems, and the sooner you get rid of it, the better off you will be. But you see, that day is not coming for a while. The redemption of your body is yet future, Romans chapter 8. But you and I today have to reckon ourselves. We have to make sure we walk after the Spirit, not after the flesh. We have to make sure that we put the things of God first in our lives. We do not get sidetracked when problems come, that we blame God. We do not give God what He desires and what He commands of us. We do not do what is right with Him. We always give Him His due and everything He wants and then allow Him by faith to work out our situations in life.

XIV. The Path to a Victorious Life

I have told people over the years, for a child of God, the greatest position for you and me to be—and I have said this, believe this all my life—the greatest position as a child of God that you and I can find ourselves in, I liken it to a guy hanging way out on the limb of a tree, 500 feet above the ground. You are hanging onto that limb, and you can hardly move because that limb is going to crack and going to break if you put it any way down, so you are just stuck there. Then you look back at the tree itself, and lo and behold, there stands your Savior, Jesus. But instead of giving you a hand and throwing you a rope, you see that your Jesus, while you are hanging on the limb that is ready to crack, He is standing there with a smile on His face and a hacksaw in His hand. Now, that is the position you want to be in. You have to trust Him. You have to realize that there is no situation He will put you in. And the truth of the matter is, there is no situation you will put yourself in that you cannot get out if you want to. But you do not get out by walking after the flesh, only after the Spirit. You do not get out by making God your enemy. You get out by drawing nigh to God, putting Him first in your life.

I want to leave you with a great verse. Well, verse 14 first, and then we will be done here.

Romans 8:14

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Now, I do not know what better I could have given you on the time that we are living today with the problems that God's people have. If you wanted another fuzzy feeling, nice message that will make you feel good through the afternoon, and then when the reality comes in next week, you fall apart, you came to the wrong place today. I want to see you come to the point where you have the victory of God in your life. I want to see every one of you live above the circumstances. I want to see you be able to get out of the hole you buried yourself in and get to the point where you stand alone, and you get that thing with God in your life that you can become everything that God wants you to be. This is one of the most practical lessons that you will ever find in your life. I do not know anywhere in the Bible that there is more material packed into this thing that sums it all up of what your life and my life should be.

Now, I said some things here that I do not want to be taken the wrong way. First of all, you young Christians, when I said what I said about giving and all of those things, I realize that when a person comes in, you have to give because of you recognizing what God has given to you, and it takes some time for you to do that. Just ignore my words as far as, do not walk out of here and say, "Well, you know what, he was talking to me." I am not talking to you. Everybody here, and you young Christians who have been coming a short time, a year or so, and you are finding yourselves, and you have precarious situations at home and all of these things and situations, that is not what I am talking about. If you think that was a plea to have this church give more money, I will tell you what, I could care less one way or the other. It is not about that. I said it earlier, your giving is not for God's benefit; it is for your benefit. But it is a place where you start to trust God. If you cannot trust in God with that, you will never trust Him with anything. And that is where you have to be.

Now I want to leave you with a great verse, and this really sums it up. If you do not have this verse in your repertoire of verses, you need to put this verse in. You definitely need to mark it in your Bible, and you need to memorize it. Probably most of you already have. But it is a great verse, and it is a New Year's verse. All of this that we talked about today will tie right into what we are going to do on New Year's Eve: a year that ends the bad choices, a year that ends walking after the flesh, and a year that starts walking in the Spirit. I want to show you how to do that on New Year's Eve.

But I want to give you a great verse, a familiar verse to me. I know it like I know everything in my life. This verse has been with me for so long, and probably with a lot of you. It is in Proverbs chapter 3. If you have 3x5 cards, I am sure you have this on here. Proverbs chapter 3, verses 5 and 6. It says it all, and I want to leave you with this thought today:

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

You want the secret in a verse? You want everything that I have talked about today consigned in a verse? There it is. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." That is what got us in the mess we are in. "Lean not unto thine own understanding." "In all thy ways," all your ways, everything you do, "acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." That is the key.

I want you to have a long life. I want you to have a successful life. I look at you, and I told you this before, the thing that is the hardest thing in the ministry to me, I can put up with all the crazies. I can put up with all the abuse. I can put up with all the things. I think the thing that is the most hardest thing for me in dealing with people is to see men and women who have the potential to really do something for God. All they lack is the determination and the attitude to get it done. I look at them, and I know where I can see them as God sees them. I have no idea what God's plan is for them. But I do know this: I know that God has a plan for every child of God once they get saved. I saw it in Jeremiah. The Bible said that God knew Jeremiah before he was formed in the world (Jeremiah 1:5), and He laid out everything that He wanted Jeremiah to accomplish. I believe with all of my heart, that is foreknowledge in the Bible. I believe that God knows you and has a plan for you and everything that He wants for you to have. I also believe that our flesh will unchoose and make the wrong choices against what God wants us to do. That is why you have to "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

Break the verse down. It breaks down into three or four simple concepts:

8. Trust in the Lord.
9. With all thy heart.
10. And lean not unto thine own understanding.
11. In all thy ways acknowledge Him.
12. And He shall direct thy paths.

You can break it down, and you live by Him. That is where we are at, and that is what I want for you this next year. Many of you are going to make it happen, but you have to put Him number one in your life, and that is what it takes. We had bound every eye closed.