

Romans 8:1

Sunday 12/7/2008

This leads to a great chapter, Romans chapter 8. Romans chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 really begin to hit the heart of where we are as Christians and all the things that we have to struggle with. I think they are some of the greatest material. I have been bringing you through, breaking it down almost verse by verse, because I wanted you to learn these chapters and get them into your Bible. At the same time, I do not want to just give you the academics of the Bible. I do not want you to miss the practical side of things.

I thought this week, before I entered into chapter 8 and really got into it, I wanted to handle that chapter in a unique way to help you grasp all that material. It is probably one of the greatest chapters in the Bible for you and for me, for the victory that we ultimately have in Christ. I wanted to take what we have looked at and put it into perspective for us, to give a practical point of view of what this material is. We have given you the study guide, so to speak. We have broken those chapters down and basically defined it all for you. Now I would like to take just one message and put it back into a practical point of view that will help you.

My ministry has always tried to be this way, where I try to balance it out. I do not always preach to you; sometimes I teach to you. Sometimes I combine the two, and sometimes we work things around to help you grasp a better understanding of things. I think there is value in that. Last week we looked at the heart of Romans chapter 7. We saw that the real issues in our life are our flesh. We also know now from the book of Romans chapter 7 that the law has no more dominion over us once we are saved. Your flesh is now dead, and your soul is free to marry another, which is the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The True Definition of Success

Everybody wants to be successful. There is no end to seminars you could go to by people who have been very successful in life. Many of them are Christians, and they will put on seminars. They will bring in guys from around the country that are very well off and have made some great personal gains in their life. Many of them are success stories, that they had nothing and now they have everything. Many of them have made their own fortunes and made their own lives, and you can go to endless seminars where someone will tell you how to be successful.

Over the years, studying my Bible and watching what God does in people's lives, and watching the men and women that God has put into my life, I have come to the conclusion that success for a child of God is simple. It really does not take a motivational seminar. It really does not take going to anybody's seminar. I think the true success that God looks for in any child of God is simply this: a man or a woman who, after they get saved, finds out what God really wants them to do with their life, and then gives the rest of their life fulfilling that. I think that is the greatest definition of success that we are ever going to find.

In light of Romans chapter 7, where we understand now that the problems we all face are our flesh, the bottom line is simply this: the quicker you and I learn to deal with our flesh and start walking after Christ and the Spirit of Christ, the better off we are going to be. Every year, when it

comes down to this time of the year, at the end of the year, I look back over this church at the people who have come through this door over the last years. People have come and they are no longer here. The people that maybe never really got plugged in, maybe somebody brought them, and they came in with problems into their lives. Many times, you have worked with many of them, and they have had issues in their lives, and they never made it.

It always bothers me because, and I will talk about this a little bit later on, the thing that I really look for and I know about the Bible is there is absolutely no reason, absolutely no reason, for any saved person not to have the victory in Christ Jesus. I see people that come in, and they seemingly do not make it. They come for three or four weeks, or maybe a month or two months, and then you do not see them anymore. They start to get into the program, and they start to go into a structure, and you try to teach them the Bible. Many of you have started discipling them. They come in with issues in their lives, and you begin to try to work them through, and of course it lasts for about maybe a month, two months, and they all follow the same pattern. It is almost predictable.

Yet I want to say this before I go any farther in this: we have some people in our church that I am so absolutely proud of. Many of you have come in from your indigenous church, and you have had some issues in your life. I never, never, never point a finger at anything that anybody has ever done in their life. We all have baggage, and we all have things in our lives we are certainly not proud of. We all have things in our lives that we did not do right with God, and I am certainly no one to point a finger at you, and you are certainly no one to point a finger at anybody else. We all are flesh, and we all have our up days and our down days.

But I think the thing that impresses me more than anything else and gives me a deeper respect is that I have watched some of you folks come into this church who had some issues. You came into this church, and maybe you did not get saved, and nobody ever disciplined you, or you just got saved, or you were saved a while back but you never had anybody in your life. You got into some issues in your life, and those issues were kind of overwhelming to you. You are sitting here today, and I know this to be true, you are sitting here today when in actuality you should probably not be here. You should probably not be here simply for this reason: your problems were so overwhelming that in most cases most people do not make it, and I have the utmost respect for you. It endears me to you that I have watched you struggle through things and do what is right in the face of situations that many times most people do not do what is right. You had an easy out, and you did not take it, and that means more to me by watching people and what they struggle with.

So I want to preface what I am saying today and let you understand that this message is to help you. I deal with people, and many of you deal with people, and you quickly learn in dealing with people that life is about choices. The whole Bible is a book built around choices. Do you know that? You realize it from Genesis chapter 1 to Revelation chapter 20 that everything in the Bible is about a man having a choice.

In the Old Testament, God came down to the nation of Israel, and He established the nation of Israel as His people. Once He established them as His people, He gave the whole world a choice.

He said, "These are My people. I have set them in this land. If you want to have a relationship with Me, you have got to come through them. Now you have a choice. You can stay where you are at in your pagan culture, or you can find God through My nation, the nation of Israel. That is your choice."

When we get to the New Testament, God no longer has a nation; now He has a church, the Church of Jesus Christ, the body of Christ. You and I, in our daily walk with God, we offer people a choice. We offer lost people. How many times throughout the week do some of you call me or I talk to you, and you tell me about people that you are witnessing to at work, and you are telling the story of Christ? You are doing what the Bible says our job is. You are giving them an alternative; you are giving them a choice. They are lost, without hope, without Christ. You are presenting out of the darkness into the light and giving them exactly what they need in their life, and that is a choice.

Once you get saved, the choice is not over. Your eternal security is now set, and you are saved, you are going to heaven. But after you get saved, you have another choice. You know why? Because life is choices, and the next choice you have to make after you are saved, and it does not seem like it ought to be a choice but it becomes a choice, is this choice: are you, now that you are saved, going to give your life to God, or are you going to keep it yourself? Life is all about choices. The Bible is all about choices.

I told this to somebody this week, I do not remember where we were, I talked to so many people. This week I told somebody, "The Bible is built around two concepts: a wise man and a foolish man." You find them defined in the book of Proverbs, the book of Ecclesiastes, and the book of Psalms. Everything else in the Bible is built around a wise man and a foolish man. The wise man, the Bible says, makes the right choices, and a foolish man, the Bible says, makes the wrong choices.

You do not have to get involved in people's lives very long. You do not have to begin to disciple somebody past lesson one. You do not need to have to sit down with somebody, and most of you already know this that are working with people. You do not have to sit down very long in dealing with people that you learn one of the greatest lessons in life, and you quickly learn that life is about choices. So it stands to reason, the more bad choices we make over time, the harder it is to fix our problems. It is just as simple as that.

II. The Barbed Wire Fence of Bad Choices

You think that people could understand it is like falling into a barbed wire fence. Barbed wire was something that they came up with back in the 1800s, and it revolutionized a lot of things. They will take barbed wire in the military and they will put it in long rolls like this, and you usually see it on fences, but they will take it and they will put it into hoops like rolls, and they will put a whole perimeter around, and they call it concertina wire. They will put a whole perimeter looped, and maybe then put another one tangled into it, and another one tangled in. Sometimes I have seen them eight or nine, twelve feet thick. Of course, in the middle of the

night, if you are attacking something, you get in the middle of that barbed wire, you are fixed, you are not going anywhere.

Barbed wire is like the problems we get into. It is filled with little barbs on it, and the problem is when you fall into barbed wire and you really get into it, really get tangled in it, the more you struggle, the more tangled you become. The only way to get out of a barbed wire entanglement, and in combat it never happens because you are there more than 10 seconds and you are probably dead, but in reality, the only way you can get out of a barbed wire entanglement is to stop what you are doing, quit fighting it, and then one barb at a time unhook yourself. Even that is going to take quite a long while. That is the way we get in our lives. Our problems become a compounding effect, and the harder we struggle and the harder we fight, the more tangled we become, and there is only one way to get out of our problems: dealing with them one problem at a time.

My goal in the next year with where we are at and what we are doing, and I want to tell you, I am so proud of so many of you. I am so pleased with so many of you because I am telling you, and I am going to keep prefacing this all the way through my sermon, because I want you to understand that this sermon is a summary of what we have learned, and I want you to know that some of you have learned those lessons, and I am so proud of you because you have actually stopped in your life, quit fighting it, and began to unhook yourself one barb at a time.

I never, I will say it again, I never hold anything against anybody that they have done in the past. We have all made mistakes. I think the tragedy is not that we have all made mistakes in life; I think the tragedy becomes when we do not learn from those mistakes and we continue to make those same mistakes. My goal next year, with what is going on here and what God is doing in your life, is to get as many of you as I can walking after the Spirit of God, helping you, bringing this church along. We talked about last year being the year of the Bible, and we saw a lot of great things that God has done, and it has changed so many of your lives. I work with you every week, and I talk with you, and I see what God is doing in your life, and I am so proud of what God has done and what He is continuing to do, and I want to build on that.

That is why I want to take New Year's Eve and I want to designate that. We have always had some great things on New Year's Eve. We have had some great, and I always try to make them something that you can bring your friends to and that you can tell them about. We are going to talk about the problems in the Middle East, we are going to talk about UFOs, or we are going to talk about this, we are going to talk about that, and you get an interesting subject, and you can bring a lot of people in, and that is how the Spirit of God moves them.

Well, I do not know how exciting it is going to be for you to tell your friends that we are going to really have a great time and how to build a relationship with God. That does not seem as exciting as the Antichrist and how many warts he has got on his left ear or whatever the case may be, but I do not really care. I hope people come, and everybody is welcome to come, but the truth of the matter is, I am doing this for you. I am doing this for every one of you who have really come through and done what God has wanted to do in your life. I want to help you have 2009 as the best year of your life. We are going into some tough times. It is going to get a lot rougher before

it gets better, and if there is ever a day in our lives that we need to have what I call a working relationship with Christ, that you understand where you are at with Him and where He is at with you, it is the day and age that we are living in, and I want to take that time and I want to help you and bring this church to the place because many of you are ready for that.

Look at Romans chapter 8, verse 1. I do not want to get into the book of chapter 8 in Romans yet, but I want to take this verse and use this today because it is a great verse. It says this:

Romans 8:1

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

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. Help us today. Help us to take this lesson and lay it out and help these people, Father, who have come through some deep water. That is what the ministry is. It is helping people out of all of the things in their life that would drown us and sink us. Lord, we ask You, Father, to help us today. I thank You for all the things that You have done in people's lives and how that You are such a good God, and Lord, that You love us, and I thank You, Father, for all that You do. We ask You now to bless our time today in Jesus' name and for sake we ask it. Amen.

Now it says in Romans 8:1 that there is now therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Remember I told you last week that there were two types of condemnation. There is a spiritual condemnation where you die and go to hell and you are condemned to hell. Then there is a physical condemnation. An unsaved person gets the spiritual condemnation, but a saved person, that is what he is talking about here. Notice what he said: he says, "There is now therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." That is a physical condemnation. That is a condemnation of your flesh.

You know what that condemnation is? That is a condemnation that you lose your family, that you lose your marriage, that you lose your life, that you lose your job, that you lose your health, that you lose something because you walk after the flesh instead of walking after the Spirit. That is what it is talking about. No condemnation. The physical condemnation is the baggage that we have in life because of the bad choices that we have made. I want to talk to you today and try to help you understand that there are some things that we can do.

When I deal with people, and people come to me and they have some issues, obviously when you start to deal with people that have severe problems, there is no way that you are going to be able to fix all of their problems. Some of them have a long history of issues, and those issues have compounded over the years. But the first thing I try to stop in their life, there are some things that I cannot do today. I tell them this, "There are some things that I cannot do for you today. We will get those done in time. But there are some things that we can do right now."

You know what we can do right now? We can stop making any more bad choices in life. That is what we can do today. We can put something in your life that will stop you from making any more bad choices in life. Let me ask you a question. If you go home from church today, knock on wood, I hope this happens to nobody. If you go home from church today and your pipes froze

last night while you were, you did not see it this morning, and you walk in there and you walk in your kitchen and there is water hemorrhaging everywhere. Water spurting out of the pipes. You have two inches of water on the floor. It is running down the steps. It is getting everywhere. What is the first thing you are going to do besides call Bubba? What is the first thing you are going to do? Shut the water off.

Well, if you have problems in your life and you are hemorrhaging everywhere in your life, and it is because of bad decisions in your life, what is the first thing you think we ought to start doing? Stop making bad decisions. See? That is where you start. There are some things you can do right now, and that is shut the water off.

III. The Cost of Bad Choices

Bad choices are like going to the store and buying clothes. Have you ever noticed that? Now we have all made bad choices. I have made some terribly bad choices in my life, and I am sure you have too. We all have, we are back in our lives, and it is like I said, this is not a finger-pointing session this morning. This is a summary of what we have learned so we can get the practical point of view.

Do you ever go to buy clothes? My favorite place is Walmart. I think Walmart has great prices and great clothes. But have you ever noticed you have small, medium, and large? Have you ever noticed your bad choices fit in that category? You have small bad choices, and they do not seemingly affect you too much. You can get by with those. Then you have medium bad choices, and medium bad choices are a little more severe than the small ones, but you can still survive with that. But then you have large bad choices. Now it gets a little more complicated.

But have you ever noticed when you go to Walmart? I do not know if this is true in other places, but I suspect it is. You can, you know, you go to Walmart and it says small, medium, and large, and you get a deal, and I always get excited because the deal is small, medium, and large for nine dollars. Then as you get excited, you then see an extra sign that says, "Extra large size is two dollars more." Do you know that? You know why? Because when you get to the extra large bad decisions, and the extra large bad decisions, it costs more money. It costs more money.

Bad decisions are like buying clothes. Some of them you pay a standard price, and in some of them there comes more of a price. Some you can get away with. Some will hurt you spiritually, and very frankly, some will destroy you spiritually in time. The problem becomes, and this is the issue, we make so many bad choices before we decide to do what is right that when we decide to do what is right, we get overwhelmed with all of the baggage of the 10 to 15 and 20 years of the bad choices.

You know what it looks like? I have dealt with people. They tell me, "You know what, Bob? It just seems like there is one disaster after another. When I begin to get a little farther ahead or we begin to look like there is light at the end of the tunnel, bang, man, it all comes down again." People will say to me, they will say, "Bob, I am trying. I am doing what is right. I am trying to do what is right." I understand where they are at. When you are in the hole, man, and all you can see is the top up there, and it looks like there is nowhere out. I can understand how you can get to the

point where you are saying, "Hey, look, I am trying to do what is right. I am trying to do what is right. Why won't God help me get out of this mess?" Well, the answer to that is God will help you get out of that mess, but it is going to be one barb at a time.

You know what is wrong with our country? We are in serious issues. We had the housing problem where people saw a quick fix to get a house. We are one of the most greedy countries that you are ever going to find in the world. I am appalled of what happened last week at Walmart, my favorite store. Up in New York City, they had one of these specials, and there were 500 people lined up to get into Walmart when they opened the doors, and when they opened the door, the Walmart person who opened the door, the employee, got stampeded to death by 500 people. The Walmart employee got killed because they opened the door to let 500 bargain-hungry people in, and while he is laying there and the paramedics are giving him CPR to try to save his life, people are stepping over him to still get the bargains. When the police finally cleared the store out, there were people that were upset because somebody is dead and kept them from getting the Play-Doh or the PlayStation or whatever it was that they wanted to have in life. That is about as sick as this world can get. That is where we are at. It is that kind of mindset that has destroyed America.

We had an issue with the housing problem where so many people are losing their homes. Some of the people are losing their homes because they are good people, but they get caught in a downward slide of everything else. Many of those people lost their homes because of the fact that they saw a quick fix. They took a loan, they never read the fine print. They looked at the immediate, not the long term. They thought, "Wow, this is a great deal. I will worry about the other money later." Now across this country, and yes, it was the lenders too. It was the banks who knew what they had, who should not have given people their loan, but they are greedy like the people are greedy, and everything gets greed and it goes down the tubes.

Now we are facing an issue with the automakers, the big three. We are facing an issue now where we are bailing out everybody. Before it is all done, the veterinarians are going to get bailed out. The post office is going to get bailed out. Everybody is going to get bailed out. We are printing money to bail everybody out that we do not have the money to print, and we ask, "What are we going to do?" We are not going to let the big three go down, and we are not going to allow 500,000 workers to lose their jobs. That will put the economy belly up, and it is already going down like the Titanic, and we are not going to do that. But the problem with all of that is this: nobody learns anything. The automakers come in, and the CEOs, and I love that the CEOs come in and they say, "We need a bailout." He is making 22 million dollars a year. He flew in on his private jet. They live like kings, and everybody down the line, and the unions have got everything so set up that you cannot go to work and still get all the money you would have if you work. It cannot work that way forever in the real world, and the problem is we will bail them out, and because we bail them out, nobody will learn anything.

You know why God does not come down and take all your problems away the moment you do what is right? You know why He will let you go through those things? Because we do not learn any lessons if we just wipe away everything. He wiped away your sin. Thank God for that. But the bad decisions we make, sometimes they carry consequences, and the bigger shirt you buy, the

more money you have to pay, and the bigger the decisions are that you make that are wrong, the more it comes with it. Yes, God will help you. God will help you get through it, but He is going to do it in your time, and if you think you are going to sow your wild oats and then simply pray for crop failure, it is not going to work that way. You need to learn something and understand something out of Romans chapter 5, 6, and 7. Walking in the flesh will produce some long-term consequences.

I have told you before my favorite illustration. I worked at the Hoover Company, and I told you this before, when I first got out of high school before I went in the army, and I worked there for quite a while, and even after I got out of the army. We had these storage areas, and my job was to go in and get parts for all of the washing machines on the line. I drove a fork truck and kept everything in there, and we had these storage bins, these areas that just went down for like hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of feet, and on racks on all sides, they had all the supplies, they had everything you can imagine. I always thought to myself, because you know what, when you get mad at the factory and mad at the management, and they do not think you treat you right, I always had this idea that it would really be fun to start at the front of that aisle and just take my frustration out by ripping everything down. I mean, buckets, a little park that just would scatter everywhere. All kinds of hoses, all kinds of belts, just walk down that thing saying, "I will show you, ram, ram, ram, ram. Whoa, look at that, what is this?" And throw stuff over there and just throw it down and push it down, throw it down, and all the way down. Now I am at the end of that thing, man, and I have got, I mean, it is a mountain of stuff, and I am saying, "That will show you." Then I decide I am going home. "Oh, there is no door here." You know what? I suddenly realized my only way out is through the mess that I created, and I have to pick up the mess to get out of the mess that I caused. You know what? It took me a lot longer to pick it up than it did to throw it down, did it not?

Have you ever noticed around this time of the year how easy it is to gain 10 pounds? And how long it takes to lose 10 pounds? Remember, guys, as you get older, the more you put on. I am not even talking to you women because women do not gain weight as they get older, but men do. Remember, guys, I used to walk around at the beach with that six-pack. Now your six-packs have turned into a keg. It takes nothing. It takes one holiday. You step on that scale, and the fire trucks start coming and everything. It takes a lot longer to get it off, does it not? It is true.

IV. Common Factors in Unresolved Problems

Everything in life, 30 years in dealing with people and their problems, I have gained some tremendous insight, and I have cataloged in my own little area where I keep things for helping people, some of the major factors that contribute to some of the bad choices that we make. This is why a lot of the people that come in with problems, I mean, some of them that come in throughout the year, and I am here to help everybody. I am an equal opportunity employer. Everybody gets a fair shake here. You can have whatever you want. I will put as many people as it needs. Like I told somebody a couple of weeks ago, I said, "You know what, honey? I said, I can put 10,000 people with you, but it will not make any difference if you do not do what we tell you to do." I mean, because at the end of the day, it is your problem. I can put people to help you,

but I do not have a pill that is going to make your problems go away. You have to take and you have to deal with that.

I found in dealing with people that will come in, and I feel such a burden for them because I see where they are at, and I think it is even harder because I understand where they are at, and it frustrates me that sometimes, the devil never misses a trick. It was an old saying that I was growing up as a young man. I think Bob Jones Sr. said it. The old man Bob said a lot of one-liners that were so profound, and he said something one time that I had ingrained in me by all the men that taught me the Bible, and it was simply this: he says, "You know what? Sin never leaves a man any better than it finds him." Boy, that is so true.

But I have cataloged in my own mind, I think the number one thing that attributes to the fact where people do not make it is the absolute lack of self-discipline. We live in an absolutely undisciplined society. I have never seen in some of the people that I have worked with over the last couple of years, the absolute lack of self-discipline. People who cannot do something right four or five times in a row. I mean, absolute dysfunctional breakdown of self-control. No self-discipline will always lead to walking in the flesh. The absence of self-discipline will affect every area of your life. It will affect your finances. It will affect your job performance. It will affect your family. It will affect your children.

I have told you all through this, the key to this thing is consistency, but the key to consistency is self-discipline. I have known people that you try to get them in the Bible, they cannot read the Bible seven days in a row. Something gets in their life that keeps them from doing that. I try to tell them when I work with them, "You know what? Here is the deal. Here is the deal. You have some issues, and we can fix those issues, but here is what I want you to do." I mean, it is not like I give them a back-breaking program. I tell them this: "Be here Sunday morning. Be here Thursday night. Let me put somebody in your world, or in some cases, four or five people in your world, to help you walk you through where you are at." You know what? People cannot even get to Sunday morning and Thursday night on a consistent basis. There is so much clutter in their world. There is so much baggage that they bring in from where they have come from, and they just do not have the discipline, the discipline to do what you have to do, and they lose their focus.

I watched it when we, you know, we have a, I do not, there is a, and you do not know who this is, there is a guy that comes to this church, and he shows up about every four or five months, and he has got some severe issues, and you do not know who he is, so it is not like I am telling a story, you will never figure it out, you would not even know he is here. But every time he comes to me, every time he comes back to church, he pulls me aside, he says, "I really want to serve God. I really want to do something. What can I do? What can I do?" You know what my last statement was to him? I said, "Come to church for four weeks in a row. Try that for just starting out." He will come one time, and you will not see him for three months. He has got so many issues in his world, and he has got some serious issues, and he has got so many issues in the world that he cannot get to church just two Sundays in a row. Now I am borrowing the fact that you work or your kids are sick. I mean, please understand, I am not talking about that. I am talking about somebody coming in with issues. I mean, if you went into the, if you were just in a bad car wreck

and they took you into ICU and took you into the emergency room, and the doctors came in there and the doctor started working over you to try to save your life and try to do this and try to do that, and they got you to the point where, and you just got up and walked out of the emergency room and said, "Well, I am feeling a little better now." The doctor said, "Well, you have a concussion and you have this." "Yeah, but I have a ballgame I have to go to." You know what? You are going to die. When you are that serious off, you better listen to somebody who knows how to fix the problem you have got. But the reason why they cannot, no self-discipline, no self-discipline, and we lose our focus.

This guy, I mean, this guy signed up when we, when we did our thing, he was here just not too long ago, and he signed up for the soul-winning class like many of you did, and I thought to myself when he signed up for it, "You know what? That is three weeks away. He will never be here." There were people that signed up for the soul-winning class that came to the first, they could not get to the second one because they got so much clutter in life. Something happened between the first one and the second one. There is no discipline. There is no consistency in what you have to do. One of the things that you have to begin to do is get the clutter out of your life.

You know what the second thing is? I see people have when they come in: stubbornness. You get into a problem because you will not listen to good advice. Good advice. You know what? And you stay in problems because you will not listen to good advice. The book of Proverbs is full of things that talk about something like this: the wise man who takes instruction versus the fool who cannot take instruction, and it is that simple. We get people who think that, "You know what? I am going to do it my way." And you have done it your way all your life. Look at the mess you got it in. We have got people that think that they are not going to listen to anybody.

I have had people that I have put you with, and you know this is true. You know this has happened in our last five years. People have come in, and when they come in, they are all broken up, and they are all this, and they are all that, and they want to do this, and they want to be a missionary to Timbuktu and everybody around the world. You know, and I read it again, get it to come to Jesus time, man. You know what? You begin to work with them, you begin to take them through the Bible, and you begin to see it is not two or three weeks that they start dictating to you. There has to come a point in your life when you come to the end of self. You have to come and get a reality check like Dr. Phil says, "How is that working for you?" I mean, you have come to the point where nothing you have done in your life has put you into the mess that you are in. You have to realize that you better change your stubborn ways and realize that you do not have the answers and get with somebody that does.

You know the third thing I find? Pride. The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 16, verse 18, that:

Proverbs 16:18

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

I found people that come in, and they have got issues, and they do not want to pretend they do not have any issues. It is incredible, absolutely incredible. Years ago, I had a young man that was, and he was a good guy, and I had to take him out of ministry, and it was one of the hardest

things I ever did, but he had some problems in his marriage that he would not deal with, and he was one of these guys that tried to shove his problems underneath the thing. You know, he is the kind of guy that when you try to teach him something, I mean, I tried to work with him. His wife was talking to me behind the scenes and saying, "Hey, look, you know what? My husband is this, and he is doing that, and he is not doing right with this, and I am not getting ministered to, and yet he can go minister to everybody else, but he does not take care of me." And she says, "But you cannot tell him because if you do, he is going to get mad at me, and he is a very prideful guy." And I said, "Well, why do you think he won't?" And she says, "Well," she says, "he is afraid. He is afraid that if you, you know, he is afraid that, you know, you will be mad at him and all of these things." And I said, "Well, I love him. I am not mad at him." And I went on with the thing, and you know, and he was the kind of guy that if you went to a class and you taught him a class, I put him into a, I put him into a family kind of orientated class, and hoping, you know, that he will pick up, the Spirit will touch him on the shoulder. You know what he got out of class? Oh, he got a class. "Oh, I will learn this so I can teach somebody else." It was never, "I am going to learn this to apply it to my family first." It was, "Forget the family, I want to go out and teach everybody else." Well, after about a year and a half of that, his marriage went down the tubes, and I had to pull him out of ministry, and I asked him, I said, "Why, why, why did you not come to me when we could have fixed this? Now your wife is done with it. She does not want to mess with it anymore. We have got a serious issue here." You know what his answer was? He says, "Bobby," he says, "I was, I was afraid that if I came to you with the problem that you would take me out of my ministry." And I said, "What a stupid thing, because you know what? You just took yourself out of the ministry. I would not have taken you out of the ministry, out of work with you within the process, but because you did not, because of your pride, because of your arrogance, now God took you out of ministry. I did not do anything." Pride, pride, pretending you are something when you are not. Pretending you do not have any problems when you do.

You know what the fourth one is? Lack of courage. Lack of courage. I will tell you something, it takes courage to admit you have issues. I think Joshua chapter 1 is one of the greatest chapters in all of the Bible that deals with courage, and in that great chapter, it talks about the aspect of courage to believe the Word of God, courage to obey the Word of God, and courage to rest in the Word of God. We talk about standing for the King James Bible, and that does take courage because you are going to get blasted wherever you go. You are going to get blasted wherever you go, and you guys tell me all the time where you are at work, and Nikki was telling, Halliburton was telling me this morning about a guy she was witnessing to at work and talking about the King James Bible, and you all do that, and it takes courage to be able to stand up for something when nobody else in the world believes it. But you know what it takes more courage to do? It takes more courage to obey what the Word of God says. It is one thing to stand up and proclaim it, it is something else to take it internally and obey what it says, and then it is even harder to rest in it. I have so much respect for those people who, in spite of all of the things that they have been through, all the baggage that and the bad choices they have made, and I again, I keep saying this all the way through it, I am, this is not a message of consternation, this is not a message of putting somebody down, this is the message of honesty and opening and realizing that of Romans chapter 5, 6, and 7, with all that we have learned, walking in the spirit versus walking in the flesh, there is a practical point, and there are some things that we need to understand.

You know what the fifth thing is? The last thing I find in most people that will not fix their problems and the reason why so many people do not make it, it is because they are dishonest. Oh, I do not mean they stole any money. I do not mean that they stole your car. I do not mean that you cannot leave them in a room in your house and go another room and they will not steal your silverware. I am talking about they are dishonest with themselves. They deceive themselves.

You know, we get people, they get into financial problems, and they think the first thing, "Well, if I just had more money." We get people that, you know, that do not read their Bible, and your answer will be, "Well, if I just had more time, I would read my Bible." We have people that said, "Well, I cannot get to church or I cannot come to this because I have too much going on in my life." The problem is that you cannot live that, you do not need more money, you do not deal with the money you already have. The problem is the fact that you could give you a million dollars, and you would just be in a million dollars more of a mess. The fact that problem is you are not doing right with what God has given you. There is no balance in your life. Your problem is you cannot live with what you have. You are out of balance. There is no discipline, and you are failing to see the fact that the problem is I do not need more stuff, all I need is to manage the stuff I have.

My Bible says that God shall supply all your need according to His riches in Christ Jesus, not your wants, your needs. Now we all have wants, and I am as big a wanter as anybody. I looked at those presents that she put under the tree up there, and none of them had my name on them. I am just like you, I want things, but there has to be a balance in it. I am not saying you go through life with only what you need. You only need one pair of shoes. Pam, how many you got? Jamie, how many you got? Bob, how many do you have? I have got three tubs full. I have to tell my kids when they were growing up, when they would want something like a pair of shoes, you know, I always give them this story, "Honey, I once said, 'I really want those shoes,' then I saw a man who had no feet." They said, "What is that got to do anything, Dad? I want them shoes." It did not work. We all have wants. Need a jacket? Come to my house. My wife always gives me a tough time, so my kids, everything I buy, I buy in twos. To me, that is just biblical. Two by two, they went into the ark. Two by two, He sent them out. I mean, hello, you guys wish you were as biblical as I am. You see, we do not need more stuff until we learn how to deal with the stuff that we have.

Every year I look back at the people who came through this church. In almost every case, I am talking about the ones that they never really plugged in. They come in with issues. You brought them in. Most of you brought them in. You saw that they had issues. You said, "Hey, come here. They know there is a great church. This is where you are going to hear some Bible." They came in. You, you maybe met him at work. You never invited them, and they came and they said, and they come up to me and they said, "Man, this is great." They came what, a month, two months, three months, four months. They came in and sat down with me, and we talked about the issues in their life, and they said, "You know what? I really want to fix them. I really want to do this. I am going to quit this. I am going to quit that." Hey, all good, man. I begin to work them with you and put them into you, and you begin to work with them, begin to disciple them, begin to help

them. Many of them, I put numbers of you around them. We have had people that men and women who have had some serious issues that I put, and I love it, eight or nine people are like a little support group that they can call and they can help, and you help them get through those times.

Why did they not make it? In every case, in every case, almost without exception, in every case, they did not make it because they could not overcome the baggage of 10, 15, 20 years of bad decisions, and they did not have these things in their lives. That is why I have such a respect for those of you that do. When I see somebody that comes into this church, and again, I do not fault anybody for the problems that you have, I really do not. When I see somebody come into this church who has had nobody ever help them with the Bible, and maybe they never seriously got involved with a Bible or any church, and they come into their, they come into the, they come into this church, and they actually want help, and they actually do exactly what the Bible says. They let the people who are working with them minister them. They actually get into their Bible. They actually get their three by five cards. They actually memorize the scriptures. They actually come Thursday night, Sunday morning, and everything that we do. They actually make this church their spiritual home. They actually take the things out of their life that are wrong and put the right things in and begin to make that transition. I have more respect for you than you will ever know. The deck was absolutely stacked against you, and you are on your way. You are on your way.

V. Biblical Examples of Choices

There are two great examples that I have in the Bible, and there are examples that you had to mark in your Bible. The first one is Lazarus in John chapter 11. Here is a man that we know that he was dead. Dead in the Bible is a picture of an unsaved man, and then he comes back to life. Jesus gives him life, a picture of a man getting saved. But we see now that he has got a problem. He was dead, unsaved. Now he is alive, he is saved. But the problem is he is wrapped in grave clothes. Those grave clothes represent all the bad choices, all the bad decisions. Lazarus was a guy probably in his 80s, maybe in his 90s. He was an old guy, and you have heard me say before, the longer you live, the more you bind yourself up in problems when you do not turn to God. The grave clothes that were wrapping him and keeping him from going anywhere, even though he was alive, he had to have help unwinding all those grave clothes. Now do you think that they just got him a pair of paramedic scissors and snipped him right up the middle and they just peeled him off? No, they had to unwind that thing one layer at a time. If you know anything about the way they embalmed people back then and the way they wrapped them, it was quite a process. I mean, you had nine or ten layers on you, and it was a tedious process. But the Bible says that Jesus said, "Loose him and let him go." Here is a picture of many people's lives when they get saved. They are bound in the old dead things that they have done for so many years. They are bound, they are wound tight, and it is no wonder that they come in and they struggle. It is no wonder they come in and many of them do not make it. It is no wonder that they come in and they have issues, but the bottom line is, at the end of the day, the Bible and life is about choices. The Bible and life is about choices.

I did not tell you guys in Institute last night this particular story when we are coming through the book of Acts. But in Acts chapter 13, when you are looking there at the church at Antioch, when you come down there and it lists the people that were in Antioch, the last person it lists was a guy by the name of Manaen. Manaen, the Bible says, was a brother, was a nephew, or some connected, he was a brother of Herod the tetrarch that killed John. Did you ever grasp that? You talk about the hand of God. Remember Herod that killed John the Baptist, had his head cut off? Well, there is one brother that killed John, that his other brother Manaen wound up in the church at Antioch serving God. You know what that tells me? They both had the same choice. How come one made it and one did not? How come one killed John the Baptist, God's greatest servant in the early part of the New Testament, had him killed? The other one turned to Christ and did everything that God wanted and winds up in a model church as one of the men that are leaders of that church. You know how that happens? You know the answer to that? The answer is life is choices. They both were raised in the same Roman Empire. They both were raised in the same godless scenario. One did it, one made it, one did not. You know why? Because life is choices. Life is choices. And we make the choices we make many times put us in a situation like Lazarus where once we get saved, you need to stand still. You need to stand still so we can unwrap you.

Then you have another example in Judges chapter 18, and that is my buddy Samson. Samson is a perfect picture of many people that we deal with in this church that come into this church, and you are going to deal with at work. He is a perfect example of people that come into this church. He is a perfect example of most Christians as you find today, and they are good. Samson is one of the nicest guys you ever met in your life. There is not, he is just a goofball. He does not do anything mean to anybody. He is just a clown. He is just a free-care guy who just loves life. I mean, he is the kind of guy that if you met him, you would probably like him. He probably would be a nice guy to talk to. I do not ever see him bullying anybody. I do not see him ever being smart or mean to anybody. He is just your general garden variety nice guy, good old boy type of guy who just cannot get a handle on it with God. You are going to find that his whole life, his whole life can be summed up by the fact that he wanted to make his choices in life, and every choice he made was a bad choice. The friends he hung out with, the women he hung out with, the places that he went. I do not know of one good choice that he made all of his life.

You know where it got him? It got him at the end of his life where God had a plan for Samson, and that plan never got realized. He never fulfilled it in the way that God intended for him to fulfill it. He never got used of God one time in his life till at the end of his life when God used him in spite of himself, because he gets taken over by the Philistines. You know what that is a picture of? That is a picture of you and I doing our thing so long that the Philistines, the world, gets absolute control in our lives. Now here he is, the man of God, the child of God. He is chained between two pillars, and the world now is making fun of him. The world is laughing at him. The world is making sport with him. They have stripped him naked. The world is standing around him, and where he should have been open and transparent for God in dealing with people, no, no, no, he had to play the game, play the man, be the fun guy, and now he is the laughing stock. The man of God, a saved, born-again child of God, the laughing stock of the world, chained to the pillars of the Philistines. He is out of control of his life, and the Philistines now have him under control. They put his eyes out. Those were the eyes that he lusted after the

women with. Those were the eyes, the first words out of his mouth, the first time you find him opening up his mouth and saying anything, he says, "I saw a woman." If there is any example in the Bible that goes along with Lazarus that shows you that walking in the flesh instead of walking in the spirit produces some bad choices, some consequences that maybe will carry on down through your life. Oh, I am not saying you cannot get out of it. I am saying you have to get out of it one barb at a time. You have to get to the point in your life where you do it God's way and you cease doing it your way.

I have a message I preached on Samson. The message is a three-point outline. It starts out by talking about Samson's life, Samson's disobedience to his parents, his disobedience to God, his disobedience and all the lifestyle that he brings into his world. At the end of his life, we find the culmination of his bad choices. We find a model of our lives where it is going when we insist on doing it our way instead of God's way. We find in the end of his life a three-point outline that sin binds you, sin blinds you, and sin grinds you. My God, what an example. I say it again, Bob Jones Senior said, "Sin never leaves a man better than it finds you."

VI. The Ministry's Purpose

The ministry has a good side and the ministry has a bad side, and learning to minister means you have to learn to deal with both. It would be nice just to deal with the nice things in ministry and not have to deal with the bad thing, but it does not work that way. The good side of the ministry is the people who fall in love with the Word of God. I do not care where they have come in life, or I will say it again, what they have done in life. They turn the corner and they begin to do what the Bible says, and God changes their life. The thing that keeps me going in the ministry and keeps me pumped up in the face of all the bad things you have to deal with, it is just simply, plainly, many of you individuals. When I see your courage, and there are days that I get down, do you think there are not days that I do not want to just go someplace else? Do you think there are not days where you just get tired of it? Do you think there are not days when you have 200 people and 25 percent of them are whammy-mammies that if you do not talk to them, they get mad, and you have to call to them like in a nursery? Do you think it does not go, do you think you do not want to wear a size 15 shoe sometime with his planet where it needs to be planted? But the good side of all of that, the balancing out, the checks and balances, is the ones that really love that book. The ones that no matter what, you are going to make it. The ones that no matter what you are going through right now or what you are struggling with, that you are going to get through because you have decided, you have decided that you are not going to make any more bad choices. You have decided you are going to do what God wants you to do.

I had to go over to the doctor the other day, and it is over at the hospital in St. Joe Hospital, and I do not hardly go anyplace, and I do not just be everywhere. Everything I go, everything I look at, everything I read, I am always trying to put in some kind of spiritually, and I am not even trying, it just comes into my head. I do not even know, I think I have got brain damage someplace along the line. I am walking in here, and I am thinking to myself, "You know, a hospital is a lot like a church. A hospital is a lot like a church." You have two kinds of people in a hospital. You have two kinds of people in a church. In a hospital, you have two kinds of folks: you have people who

are patients and people that work there. At a church, you have the same kind of people: you have people who are patients and you have people who work here helping the people that are sick. That is our job. That is our job. That is our job.

Yet you are going to find that people come in, and the bad side of it is people who have great potential, and I think it bothers me more than anything else in the world because I do not care what you do, I really do not. I do not care what you have done. I do not care, we could have a show-me-tell-me night, and we would all be in the same boat. I do not care what you have done. What bothers me and hurts me more than anything else in the world, and it is probably for me who is a people person, I mean, come on, I love people, my life is people. The thing that hurts me more than anything else in all of this world is to see a young man and a young lady that I see underneath the baggage has the potential to do something for God but never realizes that potential. That to me, that is the most tragic thing I can think of.

I do not think I have ever met maybe one or two people in my life, maybe only one or two, in almost 35, almost 40 years in the ministry, maybe one or two, and I cannot even think of their names, I am just giving me an out. I do not think I have met more than two people in all my life that I said to myself, "They will never make it. They are so far gone. They are so far bad. You first, forget it." I might find two people back in my 40 years. You know what that tells me? That tells me that everybody else that I have ever worked with, ever been associated with, everybody else that ever come through whatever minister I ever had, wherever I had it in my mind, had a chance to be what God wanted him to be, but because of the bad choices, they chose not to. To me, that is a tragedy. That is a tragedy.

You know what a tragedy is for me? If you are a member of this church and you come here every week, the tragedy is with what you get and what God provides for you and what you have at your resources at your disposal for you to stand at the judgment seat of Christ and be naked and lose everything that you have after God has given you the opportunity He has given you here. I cannot speak for any other church, but I can speak for this one because I know I am going to give an account someday at the judgment seat of Christ, and I am going to give an account of a lot of things, and I do not expect to have a golden crown or, if I just get a pair of speedos, I will be happy. That will be a sight. You are laughing at, honey, there is nothing speedo about me anymore. But I will tell you one thing I am not going to be guilty of. I guarantee you, I have a lot to give an account for, and I know it, but I will tell you one thing I will never be guilty of, that is not providing you with everything you need 24/7 in this church. There is absolutely no reason for you not to get everything you have got coming to the judgment seat of Christ other than you choose not to. I am just telling you. I am just telling you.

The Bible says in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 4:

2 Timothy 2:4

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

You know, when you got saved, God called you to be a soldier. You know what He says to you as a soldier? "Do not get entangled." That is a great word. You know what you get entangled in? Barbed wire. Do not get entangled in the things of this world. Do not get tangled up in them.

The Bible says in Ecclesiastes chapter 4, verse 12:

Ecclesiastes 4:12

And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

I have used the example before, you take a little piece of sewing thread, you know, wrap it around your finger one time, you just snap that sucker. Take that thing and wrap it around two times, you can still snap it. Wrap it around three times, for guys that are really strong. You take that little piece of thread and wrap it around your finger a hundred times, and if you have to break that on your own to save your life, you will die. That little thread represents the bad choices in life, and how many times we wrap it around our fingers is how many times we allow them in our life.

There comes a point in your life, you know, Joe J. Harold Smith used to preach the message "Payday Someday," great message. He also had another message that is much less known than that one, but I thought was even better. You know what it was? It was called "A Point of No Return." He talked about Christians who got to the point in their life, or people who got to the point in their life, because they brought so much baggage into the world that their circumstances would never let them ever get what they need out of Christ. It is not because God will not do it, it is because of the circumstances in your life, the baggage you are carrying.

You really think of it this way: you are a swimmer, and you are swimming. How long can you swim? But every time you make a bad choice, somebody puts 10 pounds on your ankles. That is why the Bible says, and Paul says, "the weight that so easily beset us" in the book of Hebrews. You get to the place in your life where your circumstances, your daily life, is so out of control, you have no say in it anymore. You do not control yourself. Your circumstances now control you. That is a bad situation to be in. We can reverse that process.

I see people come into this church with issues. You know what I think of? I think they look like they are in a canoe, and they have lost their paddle, and they are in a raging river, and they cannot get out of that canoe. They cannot stop that canoe. They cannot guide that canoe. They are a victim of that raging river, and that river just takes them wherever it wants to go, and many times our circumstances do the exact same thing. We are out of control. We are in the boat, we have no paddle. I will not tell you how the rest of that goes. We are in a boat, we have no paddle, we have no way of getting out, no way of stopping it, and wherever life takes us because of our consequences and choices is where we go. Well, you know what we want to do? We want to throw you a rope. We want to get you out of the boat. We want to get you to a place where we help you get into the place in your life where you need to. God's people, sometimes their lives are so complicated and so compounded with the bad choices they made, they cannot even get anything going in their life.

VII. The Example of Philip

I think the greatest example of what my life should be and what your life should be, if you just want one solid example of a successful man being led by the Spirit of God, and that was the opening verse, "There is now no condemnation of them that walk after the Spirit, not after the flesh." I think the greatest example personally for me is in Acts chapter 8 with the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, one of the greatest illustrations of what God wants for us and how we should be available. You know, he is doing something for God over here, but God had a plan over here, and what God did is God had the freedom and the ability to pick him up and take him wherever God wanted him to go by the Spirit of God.

Do you realize that Philip had a great revival going on in Samaria? Do you realize that when God picked him up, he never complained one time? He never said, "Well, you do not understand, I am the head evangelist here. We are having thousands of people saved. I cannot leave right now." No, no, he was not controlled by what he was doing. He was controlled by the Spirit of God that was doing it through him, and the Holy Spirit of God picked him up and brought him over and put him down on the backside of the desert with only the Ethiopian eunuch.

You know, in my military studies, I do not know if you know this or not, maybe most of you, how many of you might, and they still do it today, I think, but I know they did in World War II. At the end of World War II, there was such a pride in the military of organizations like the different divisions that each one of them kind of did a history yearbook. I do not know if you know it or not, but every action that an infantry regiment did went into the data reports and is stored someplace that they have a walking chronology of what they did, and every regiment had an assigned photographer that took pictures. So after the war, what they did is they sold them to the veterans, and many of them guys bought them, and they sold them to a veteran, and they are hardback, and they tell the history with the pictures, and it is kind of like a keepsake of where your infantry regiment had been or what airborne regiment, whatever it was, they all did it.

A while back, I got a grouping out of a guy that he is dead now, and I got his helmet and I got his book. He was in the 9th Infantry Division and the 39th Infantry Regiment, and I did a little research on him, and the book really helped a lot, and I flipped through the book, and I found the 39th Infantry Regiment, and in there it talked about the commanding officer. He was, in fact, he was killed. He was killed, and it was a great story. His name was Colonel Harry Flint. They called him Patty. He was an Irishman, and he was an older guy, really too old to be in charge of an infantry regiment, but he was. This guy was as hard as nails guy, and his motto was, "Anything, anywhere, anytime, bar nothing." And he instilled that into these guys that we need to be ready for anything, anywhere, anytime. In fact, he instilled it in there so much, and I do not know what you know, but during World War II, they usually put their division insignia, as many of them did, on the sides of their helmets, and on the side of this guy's helmet, and in the book, it is flipped through it with the 39th Division, they painted on the side, "A-A-A-0." He ingrained into them so much that they ought to be ready anytime, anywhere for anything, bar nothing.

When I looked at that, I thought to myself, "You know what? Back in World War II, a private in the infantry made twenty-three dollars a month." Twenty-three dollars a month. These guys were

willing to do anything, anywhere, anytime, bar nothing for twenty-three dollars a month. And I thought to myself, "You know what? That is exactly what we need to have. We need to have that attitude. We need to realize that God has a plan for you and for me, and that old Philip and that Ethiopian eunuch is an incredible picture that God picked him up one place and set him down someplace else because He had a job for him, and Philip was ready for anything, anywhere, anytime, bar nothing." Boy, we ought to keep our lives so fluid. We ought to not be entangled into the things of this world. We ought to be set in everything that we do spiritually, physically, emotionally, and inconsistent in our lives that whatever God wants to take us, whatever God wants to do with you. Oh, He is not going to pick you up and drop you on the backside of the desert, I do not think. He is not going to pick you up and drop you over somewhere around the world, maybe this time in your life. But you know what? I guarantee you, there are places where you go every day. There are places where you work right now. There are people under your authority or people in your world right now that He wants to have you ready for anything, anywhere, anytime, bar nothing, and we are not ready for that assignment.

VIII. Breaking Bad Habits

It is an incredible story. I read somewhere over the years, and I do not remember where I read it at. I read somewhere over the years that it takes three to four weeks to develop a really bad habit. Three or four weeks to develop a really bad habit. You know, train your flesh. I remember when I went to the doctor here last two years ago, my blood sugar was too high, so the doctor says, "You have to quit drinking anything that has got sugar in it." Well, my life is over. I mean, what is there left? And I came home and I said, "It is done. I am done. I am done." I said, "There is nothing left enjoyable in life for me because the thing I enjoyed more than anything else in the world, you are sitting down at night with a couple of big old frosty cans of Coke." Mountain Dew is really good, but you have to put it in the freezer. You have to put it in the freezer and time it. You do not want it solid froze, you want it slushy. You know what I am talking about? They are gone now.

Let me tell you the truth, is anybody here like Diet Coke? Oh, you are just, you are lying, Pat, you do not like it. If you had your druthers, you would drink the real stuff. I hate it. You know what? I do not care what they try to tell you about it. They try to mix little things in it, it does not work. It still tastes plastic. It is like drinking water out of my dog's water dish. My wife said to me, she says, "You know what? If you start drinking it," she says, "in about four or five weeks, you will not even know the difference anymore." So I tried it. You know what? I have drank now for almost a year and a half. I cannot tell the difference anymore. Took about three or four weeks for me to develop that taste for that, that I forgot what the other tastes are like. You know what? I drank a real Coke the other day. I did not even like it anymore. I am used now. See, I have got myself trained.

I do not remember where I read it. It was one of those great, you know, great psychological things that I read at some point in my life. It says some guy said one time that it takes three or four weeks to develop a really bad habit, train your flesh, and a place where you are hooked on it. But then he also said that it takes somewhere between six and eight months to break a really

bad habit. See, one that totally controls you. Why? Because you get your flesh ingrained. Well, that is why people have such a tough time kicking cigarettes. People have such a tough time kicking booze or dope or anything.

You see, there is a great principle in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 12, and I want to give you this. This is a good principle. It simply says this:

1 Corinthians 6:12

All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

The word expedient means wise. Then he goes on and says, "All things are lawful unto me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." Now you know what that verse says? The verse says we are not under the law. We can pretty much do whatever we want to do. We do not have any restraints like the Old Testament law did. And Paul is saying there, you have to use some discretion. He says, "All things may be lawful," but he says, "You have to be careful that what you do that is okay, do not take control of you, that you are always over it. It is not over you." See, that is what he said.

Now another great verse that goes along with that is in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 23, where he says basically the same thing, but then he explains a little bit farther. He said:

1 Corinthians 10:23

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

Now that is a great word, edify. That is my job as a pastor, by the way. I mean, I may do a lot of things to you, say a lot of things to you. Some of them are not so nice. Some of them hurt. Some of you do not like. But the bottom line is, at the end of the day, I do not want to ever leave you down in the gutter. I may run over with you with the bus, but I will back up and see if you are all right. That is edifying. That is edifying. My job is to always leave you, I do not care what it is, if it is Thursday night, if it is Sunday morning, if it is our one-on-one time together, you know what my number one focus is? My number one focus is to always leave you better than I find you. That is my, that is my focus. Whatever I do, you come over to my house, I want you to leave better than when you came. I want you to leave stronger. I want you to leave more encouraged. When we meet on Sunday morning, I may say some hard things. Sometimes I have not purposely tried to do today. I try to not make this in a general sense as a summary, but I am sure that it fell on some of your toes. Maybe I do not mean to do that, but you know what? It is, that is, it is edifying is the key. I want you to leave here better than you came.

You know, the word edify means that I help you. It picks you up. It encourages you. It admonishes you, but with a helping hand. It rebukes you, but with a laughing offer that I will help you. In other words, encourage you but never destroy you. When it comes to the ministry and dealing with you, I will never do anything to destroy you. I will never do anything to destroy you. You may do something to destroy yourself, but I will never do anything to destroy you

because my job, and really your job as a Christian, is we need to edify each other. We do not, we do not do any value of tearing each other down. We exist here to, if everybody in the church would edify everybody else, that is the way it is supposed to be.

You say, "What is the point of all this?" The point is this: when you walk in the flesh and not in the spirit, it takes a lot longer to fix it than it does to break it, and my friend, the longer you wait to do it right, the harder it becomes.

IX. The Compounding Effect of Bad Choices

I know a preacher, his name is Greg Eastup. Greg Eastup, back in the 60s, in the 70s, somewhere, got the idea that as a Christian, we do not have to pay federal income taxes. Greg Eastup had a ministry where around the churches, and he showed people how that in the Constitution that we really do not have to pay federal income taxes, and therefore many, many churches, many, many pastors, along with Greg Eastup, stopped paying federal income taxes. Greg Eastup is now in a federal penitentiary someplace.

I have gone through an IRS audit in my life. I have never, I mean, I went through the audits, but I mean, I tell my, my guy said, "Here is the bottom line." I said, "Do not, do not give them one more dime than they deserve, and do not give them one less dime than you have to. Give them what they need. Do not ever play with them." In my lifetime, I have dealt with two or three people who got clobbered by the IRS. I had one guy years ago, and he was a nice guy, and he was not, he was not a crook by any stretch of imagination, but the IRS does not care. He got the idea that he, I do not know where he got him, he got the idea that he was not even saved this time, and they got the idea that he could get a 501c tax exemption and start a church in his own home, calling his family to church. Okay? And therefore he did not have to pay income tax, and he got the 501c, and for nine years he did not pay taxes. But in time, they will catch up to you.

Now I tell you, with the IRS, people that do this, they think, "Well, they will not ever catch me. They have got so many people." Let me tell you something, they are watching you through your television when you are watching TV, probably. You know those black helicopters flying over your house? That is the IRS looking for you. They will always get you. After nine years, they finally got him, and he thought he was clean. You know what happened? It destroyed him. It destroyed him because he not only, here is the IRS, he not only owed nine years of back taxes, but then they put a penalty on those nine years back taxes. Then, oh, it is not done yet. Then they went back and figured all the interest for that nine years taxes, and then they figured the interest we paid it on a daily basis on the penalty on a daily basis. When he wound up, I think he wound up owing for nine years taxes, this was 25, 30 years ago, I think he wound up owing something like fifty-six, eighty thousand dollars, and when they were all done, he owed almost a million dollars in back taxes. Now how in the world do you ever pay that off? You do not. You do not.

It is not the fact that what the bad choice that he made, if they would have just said, "You made a bad choice, you need to pay eighty thousand dollars," he could have lived with that. It was the compounding interest. It was the penalties. It was the daily interest at 28 percent for nine years. My point is this: bad choices that you make in life do not just stay single bad choices. They

compound themselves. They add interest to themselves. They develop themselves. They add a penalty phase to it, and the interest is compounded every day of your life.

You want to hear a miraculous story? He got out of it. He came to one of my Monday night Bible studies, and I won him to Christ. He told me this story, scared me to death. I thought, "What in the world? This guy is going down to Leavenworth." But when he got saved, when he got saved, he actually literally, and some of you that are the old-timers would know who this guy was if I told you his name. He actually, when he got saved, he got saved, he had come to the end of himself, and through the process of getting a lawyer, Ronnie Deutsch, you see her television, Ronnie Deutsch saved me pennies on a dollar. See, I do not know who he got, but he got, he got a lawyer. That lawyer got it broken down to the place where he got him off. But here is the thing, he lost everything he had. He lost his house. He lost his car. He lost his job. He lost, he basically had to go down to nothing and start over again. But you know what? He made it. Five years later, his life was functional. He was doing God's service. He was in the ministry. He was doing everything he needed to do, and it is because he came to the end of self, and he paid the penalties of the bad choices. God will get you out of it. God will get you out of it, but sometimes you have to make some absolutely radical changes in your life.

I had a man that we knew many, many years ago, his name was Morgan Maxfield. Morgan Maxfield, many of you might remember him. He was a big guy in Kansas City. Morgan Maxfield was a millionaire. He was connected with Worlds of Fun. He lived out on the property of Worlds of Fun, and Morgan Maxfield was somewhat of a, you know, somewhat of a playboy type of guy, and he had a lot of money and was not saved, and pretty much flitted around, did what he wanted to do, where he wanted to do it. He used to come to my Monday night Bible studies. We were never friends. He would say hi to me, and he would, but I would watch him on Monday night Bible studies. He would come in after everybody got started. He would sit in the back, and I remember one night when I gave the invitation, he raised his hand that he was not saved, but he never would come forward, and then he would get up and he would leave.

Morgan Maxfield was killed in a plane crash right down here at the city airport a number of years ago, and what he had, he had a twin-engine plane. He used to fly all the place, and what he had, he had, he had two girlfriends in the plane and a couple of buddies in the plane, twin-engine plane, and they were flying to go to Lake Tahoe or someplace out there, and he took off from downtown airport, and when he took off from downtown airport, he got airborne about, oh, right off the right off the runway, and he was up about 500 feet, 800 feet, just got taken off, and an engine, the engine, one of his engines died out, and Morgan Maxfield, and Morgan Maxfield, who was a good pilot, he was a very good pilot, he flew everywhere. He crashed that plane, and everybody was killed in the crash.

When the FAA did an investigation, and I talked to, I talked to one of the guys that was connected with the FAA, he said that when they put it all together, when he took off, the engine in that plane threw a rod, and he said the engine still functioned, but what Morgan tried to do is he tried to come back in and land, and he said that was, that was, that was the wrong thing to do. He said the guy said that when you get into a situation with a twin-engine plane, it has got two engines on it, and you are, you are getting off the runway, and you are just at a low altitude, and

he was like about 800, 900 feet, he says, "You will never get back to the field." He says, "What you have to do in that particular case is the most unnerving, the most terrifying thing that you could ever think of doing." He says, "You have got to ram both throttles, throttles forward." He says, "The plane is going to vibrate like it is going to come apart because that engine is throwing that rod around in there." But he says, "You have got to bank that plane to the left, put it into a steep dive, even though you are at 900 feet, a steep dive that you are going to pull out before it did that, and you have got to pick up speed." In other words, you come up, when it starts to go crazy, you have got to ram the four throttles forward, turn it over, and come into a steep dive, pick up some speed because the problem is you did not have enough speed to stay up and come around and pick up that speed and bring it all the way around and then bring it in and then try to land it. That is the only way you can survive that kind of, that kind of problem. Well, he said it is a terrifying thing. He says, "When you ram those throttles forward, the whole plane just feels like it is going to come apart." He says, "The whole, it is terrifying." He says that when you have got a plane that is only a hundred feet and it is shaking like that, to be able to put that plane into that dive, that steep dive, and hold it around, it is the most terrifying thing you could ever. It takes absolute concentration and absolute poise and everything that you do. In other words, some circumstances of life like his require an ultra radical move to survive. The norm does not work anymore. The standard things will not fix it. There are some circumstances you will find yourself in that all you can do is make that radical turn to the left, ram the false throttles forward, and bring that baby around, and most people unfortunately, like Morgan Maxfield, either did not have the expertise or the courage to be able to do that in the moment of a time of panic, and that is no reflection on him. I would have been there, I would have probably been jumping out the window. But that is what happens many times in our life. We have to make, we have to make those radical decisions. We have to make those radical decisions.

You know what? Let us face it in the light of the next message when we get into Romans chapter 8 in particular. There are two things you are going to come to realize, and this fits right in what we are talking about today. You only have one body to serve the Lord with. You only have one life to give Him, and we waste so much of that time, and we ruin our bodies with all the things that we do to it. There is going to come a day when we will not have, we will not have anything to be able to give God. We have to, we have to keep our bad choices and our bad, our bad decisions to a minimum.

X. The Solution: Five Steps to Overcome

One last thing I want to say, and then I am going to be done. I do not want to leave you without giving you a solution. I do not want to say the things I have said without bringing the edification in it, that if you find yourself in that way this morning, I am going to tell you what you can do.

You know, I watched this week the sentencing of O.J. Simpson. I do not know how many of you got to watch it. It was one of the most compelling things I think I have ever seen in my life. I do not really follow it, and I do not really care one way or the other whether he is guilty or he is not. That is not my point. What I saw was this: if you saw the whole thing, when he stood up before the judge sentenced him, and he was a woman judge, she read him the riot act. He had just stood

up and made a very tearful, remorseful plea for mercy. He had been found guilty on all counts. It was not a point at this time where he was asking for justice because justice was going to put him away for a long time. He made a very good plea, a very emotional, and he asked the, basically the judge, he tried to explain his position, and he basically asked the judge for mercy. Let me tell you something, the judge did not show him any mercy. For about 9, 10, 15, 12 minutes, she systematically came down a list of things and just took him apart. She dealt with his arrogance. She dealt with his, his underhanded and stuff with all the money and the Goldmans and all the things that he said. She left him absolutely, absolutely stark naked before she sentenced him. She did to him what nobody had ever done in the history of life. Judge Ito, whatever his name was, he never came close to this gal. This gal terrified me, and I was not even in a courtroom. Well, I am never moving to Las Vegas as long as she is on the bench. She was something else. She took him apart, and she absolutely showed him, right or wrong, you can decide, I do not care, that was not my point. Right or wrong, she absolutely showed him absolutely no mercy.

I sat there watching that, and I thought to myself, "You know what? The truth of the matter is, there is not a whole lot of difference between us and O.J. We just never really got caught." Oh, maybe we never killed anybody, but as I sat there and I listened to her read him the riot act and just strip him down and show him absolutely no mercy, I thought to myself, "You know what? I am so thankful because I am just as guilty as he is. I am so thankful that my Judge showed me mercy." The Lord had every right to treat me just like she treated him. He had every right to throw the book at me and send me away for returning to a lake of fire, and yet my Judge, unlike that judge, showed me mercy, and I thought to myself, "I am so thankful I am saved, and my Judge, my God, is a merciful God."

Now I never want to leave you any better than I find you, ladies and gentlemen. Now let me give you five things if you find yourself in this situation or you deal with somebody at work in this situation, and then I am done. We have got plenty of time here, do not worry.

- Five things that you need to do if you are in this situation or you deal with somebody at work in this situation: You need to get honest. You need to realize that you are in this mess because of a multitude of bad choices. You need to get a perspective. God is not against you. He is not your enemy, but He is not going to come down and wipe it all away. You are never going to learn that way. You need to get help. You need to get a plan. You need to let somebody begin to deal biblically. You need what my buddy needed. You need an IRS tax attorney. I am your tax attorney. I will put a plan together. I will get you around the penalties. I may not be able to get you around all of them, but I will show you how you can get through them. I will show you how you can take a million dollar debt and squash it down like Ronnie Deutsch to a couple pennies on a dollar. But you need to stop making bad choices. You need to begin to deal with this problem. Recognize this problem. Get yourself out of the way of this problem. Do not get in a hurry. There is no overnight solution, no magic pill, but there are some lessons to learn. Put God first in everything you do. This should have been the first thing, but I want to use it for dramatic effect, so let me put the first thing last. This has been a real issue all along. So many people, when they get into bad circumstances, God's people, when they get into bad circumstances, they make God their enemy. They get mad at God for

a situation that they caused. God had nothing to do with it. God has nothing but the best for you. It is our bad choices that make these things happen, and then we get mad at God. That is the worst thing you can do.

Put God first in everything you do. The Bible says in James chapter 4, verse 8:

James 4:8

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

Make God your closest ally in this time. Get so close to God in everything that you do. Prioritize your life and put God and the things of God the number one place in your life. It is your only lifeline. It is the only way out. It is the only thing you are going to be able to do to fix your scenario. Then you are going to have to start a program of accountability for your time, for your family, maybe for your finances, or whatever else you are dealing with in your life.

Accountability is absolutely crucial, and the problem with that is that most people do not have the discipline to do that.

Let me just say this to you, and I am done. That is what this church is here for. There is absolutely no reason for any man or woman who is a member of this church for you not to stand at the judgment seat of Christ and have everything that God wants for you. There is nothing held back here. There is nothing that you cannot have. There is nothing that you cannot accomplish. There is nothing that you cannot do, but it is your choice.

Again, I want to say this before I close. I am absolutely so proud of so many of you. So many of you were faced with scenarios that were overwhelming. So many of you came into this church with issues and problems, and you struggled with things that most people never get past. You had compounding issues, and yet in your life, you chose the right course. You have put the things out of your world. You have quit making bad decisions. You let people help you make the right decisions, and you are well on your way. That is why this New Year's Eve, I want to help you go the extra mile. I want to begin to edify and add and bring into those things into your world everything that you need to be everything God wants you to be.

Now we are dismissed here. Jamie will be back there in the back. You can sign up for New Year's Eve and get your tickets, whatever you need to do. I love you. God bless you. Let us have a word of prayer and we will be dismissed. Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We do love You.