

Romans 4

Sunday 9/7/2008

We are about to get into the second section of Romans, which starts with Romans chapter 5. This is really the doctrinal section, where the Apostle Paul begins to lay out the meat of what the New Testament church is now going to believe, now that we are into the Church Age. Everything up to this point has been a preface of what has been going on. He started out in chapter 1 and 2, and we talked about how the nation of Israel and the Gentiles—one follows their conscience, the other one followed the Law in the Old Testament—but we saw that that won't do you any good when it comes to getting your own salvation taken care of.

What we are looking at in the book of Romans is the crossover from what we've had in the Old Testament under the Law, going into the New Testament Church. Now we are going to learn in this great book that your salvation is given to you; it's imputed to you. God gives you His righteousness without any conditions involved, without any merit that you can do to get it. God simply gives you His righteousness and makes you a part of His spiritual family. This is one of the great differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

We saw this in the life of two men: David and Abraham. David is a man who gets the righteousness of God imputed to him when he doesn't deserve it. Abraham is a man who gets it without doing anything. We have taken the lives of those two men to really grasp the understanding of this great doctrine of God giving you His righteousness. The thing that you ought to get from this, and the overall theme of it, is the fact that there is nothing you can do to merit salvation.

If you were saved this morning, and when the Lord comes back or you die in this life and move on to Heaven, if you're saved this morning and you go to Heaven to be with the Lord, there isn't one thing that you've done to get that. There isn't any good work you could accomplish. There isn't anything that you could ever—no amount of money could buy it, no good works could do it, joining any particular church didn't do it. God simply gave it to you upon your request, once you realize that you're a sinner and realize that you have no way of going to Heaven, and then asking Christ to save you. Then God, by the goodness of His mercy and the love in His heart, and the price that He paid on Calvary, God giving you His righteousness is just that easy.

Many times, when you start to talk to people about their soul and you talk about God's simple plan of salvation and show them how easy it is to be saved, they think that there's something wrong with it. They even get the idea in their head that getting saved has to be some great, spectacular thing that takes a lot of something you've got to do. Of course, that's not true. All it takes for you to be saved is a repentant heart that wants to change the way you're living your life, understanding that God has now made a way for you to get His righteousness by His Son dying on the cross, and then asking God to come into your heart and save you. Then God simply imputes His righteousness to you.

That's really what Romans chapter 1, 2, 3, and 4 are all about. It shows you and I that there's nothing that we can do, whether you're a Jew or a Gentile. It shows you that the only way that we're going to get any favor with God is to get God's righteousness, and the only way we're

going to do that is by coming to Him as a sinner, undeserving, and then God, through His mercy and His grace, imputing His righteousness to us after we ask Christ to come into our heart and save us.

I want to begin reading in Romans chapter 4, and then we're going to bounce back and forth through the Bible. This is going to be as much a Bible study today as it is a preaching service. I want to begin reading in Romans 4:16. I think that now that we've come this far and we've seen David in its entirety, and we've seen Abraham in two installments, and we're going to look at the last one today, I think now that these passages will maybe come to light more and mean more to you.

He says in verse 16, he's been talking about God's righteousness and getting God's righteousness, and he says this in verse 16:

And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Father, we thank You and praise You. We ask You to help us with this day, help us with this message. Give us the clarity of thought and the understanding to be able to take from all of this, Lord, and put it to work in our hearts and our lives. Help us to see and understand the truths that are here and help us to get them into our hearts and our lives. We'll thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

I. Abraham's Journey to Friendship with God

We have examined Abraham's life already in two aspects. I told you that we were going to study the life of Abraham in three different ways, just like we studied David. Remember, we talked about David: we looked at David as the shepherd, David as the king, and then David as the man after God's own heart.

When it comes to Abraham, I told you we were going to look at him in a system of threes. We're going to look at him as his name was and what it represented when his name was Abram. Of course, we know now that that means "high father." Then last week we saw the great concept and we laid out what it means in the Bible when God changes a person's name. We saw that God, in Abraham's case, changed his name from Abram, which means "high father," to Abraham, which means "the father of many nations."

I showed you last week how that is one of the greatest studies you'll ever take in the Bible, and what it means to you when you come to that point in your life that once you get saved and you work through the struggles in the process of things, of getting where you really get your head screwed on straight, where you have to make that final decision that "I'm going to really give it

all to God" or "I'm going to keep it all to myself." At that point, when a person makes that decision and begins to follow God, then that signifies God changing their name.

When God changed Abraham's name, it was a time in his life where he had, through a progression, come to the point where he had struggled just like you and I do, and he had had failures just like you and I do. Yet he came to a point in his life when he said, "You know what?" He grew far enough that he began to see and understand the vision of God. We've talked about God's will in your life, God's plan in your life, and God's work for your life.

Today, we're going to look at Abraham in our third installment, and we're going to look at Abraham in probably one of the greatest studies you'll ever take of any man in the Bible: the study of Abraham as God's friend. There are only two men in the Bible that the Bible says were God's friend. I know that God obviously had other friends, and He would equate His friends to that, I know that. But when God does something like that, it's for our attention. What it's saying is this: if you want to really understand how to be God's friend, if you want to understand what it takes to be God's friend, then you want to study not only the life of Abraham but you want to study the life of Moses. Those are the only two men in the Bible that God gives them the distinction of Him saying, "They're My friend."

We're going to look at Abraham today in Isaiah chapter 41. You don't have to turn to it, I'll read it for you. You're going to be turning it up here in your Bible in a minute.

But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

I personally think that's one of the greatest testimonies in all of the Bible. I can't think of anything that God could say about me that would please me more than for God to say about Bob Alexander, "Bob Alexander is My friend." I don't know of any greater tribute that anybody could pay to anybody, but certainly God, knowing who God is, knowing what God is, knowing the holiness of God and the character of God and the qualities of God, and knowing what God looks for, knowing the fact that in the Old Testament He wouldn't even walk through the Israelites' camp until all the unclean things were taken out of the way. For God to look at a mortal man and to say about that man, "You know, that guy, he's My friend," I just can't think of anything better that anybody could ever say, or God could ever say, or you could ever get to a place in your life when you could ever attain anything better than that.

We all are under the illusion, and this is so true, and I want this today, for even a short period of time, I want to kind of break the bubble we all live in. I know that by this afternoon we'll have got our bubble repair kit out and have fixed it and blown it back up, I know we all are. But I want this time to not only be a challenge to your heart, but I want it to be a reality for you. I want you to stop and see for a moment the illusion that we all have that we are really God's friend.

If I was to start, and maybe some of you younger Christians, you wouldn't say this because you haven't learned to quite play the game yet. But if I was to go down through the average group of Christians and I'd ask them, say I had 50 people, and I'd walk down with them and I'd say, "Do you consider yourself as a friend of God?" They'd say yes. Probably in most cases, all 50 people that are saved people would probably say, "Yeah, I think I'm God's friend."

Now, if you would go back to that same 50 people once you worked your way to the end of the line and say, "Okay, you said that you think that you're God's friend. Let me ask you a question: what does it take to be God's friend in the Bible?" I guarantee you that the same 50 people who said and thought that they were God's friend probably couldn't give you the thing in the Bible that shows you what it takes to be God's friend.

We talked about pleasing God a couple of weeks ago, and we found out, remember I asked the question, "Do you really think you please God?" And I said, "Where do you go definitively in the Bible to really find out if you do please God?" Of course, Hebrews chapter 11 is where we went, and we found out the only way we please God is to have faith in God. So you can't use that answer again.

The same 50 people that you would ask them, "Do you count yourself as God's friend?" and they think because they're saved and they go to church and they read their Bible and they tithe or whatever, they think that because they don't live the ideal lifestyle of a worldly person and they go to church and they try to do the best that they can, they think that that's all it requires to be God's friend.

I've got news for you. I think at one time I read one place where there's over 200,000 characters in the Bible. Out of 200,000 plus characters in the Bible, God only gave the distinction to two men that were His friend. Two men out of over 200,000 characters in the Bible. I guarantee you, to understand how to be God's friend lies in the lives of these two men. Yet you'd ask your average Christian, they wouldn't know that.

You know why? I'll tell you why, and this is true of me just as much as it is you. I'm not somebody standing up here claiming to be God's friend. This is the how-to class for you, I'm not doing that. But I'll tell you this: we all fall into the same illusion. Today, what I want to do is for all of us, I want to kind of burst that bubble for a moment, and I want to talk to you about what it really takes to be God's friend through the life of Abraham.

We all have things we look for in people to allow them to be inside our what we call our inner circle, to be our friend. We all do. As a Christian, I have to love everybody that's saved, I do. I don't have a right not to love anybody that's not a Christian, no matter how rotten they may be or what they may have done to me or done to you or whatever. I don't have a right as a Christian not to love them. A lot of times people get confused on this issue. I don't have a right not to love any Christian. But just because I love them in Christ, because of the fact that I'm a Christian and in Christ I can love anybody, doesn't mean that I have to allow them to be my friend.

There's a difference. I'm commanded to love everybody, but we all have a criteria by which we choose our friends. I have to love everybody, but I don't have to have everybody be my friend. There are certain people that you just don't want to be your friend, and that's okay. There are certain people that the things that they do, you don't associate with those things, you have no interest in those things. I don't always mean that they're bad things, but we all have a criteria for making friends. You're going to find that that's true of God too. God has a criteria that He looks for.

God loves everybody, "For God so loved the world." Same criteria, He loves everybody, but that doesn't mean that everybody is His friend. When it comes to being God's friend, like Abraham and Moses, there's a criteria involved. Did you ever stop and think about the people that are friends in your life? You see this all the time. All my life I've watched this, and if you're ever going to get into ministry at some point, you see this very, very carefully: when people get out of fellowship with God, when people—and everybody does at some time or the other—but when somebody starts to stumble in their Christian faith, when somebody starts to fall down, the first thing they do is to separate themselves from the people that are still in fellowship. Have you ever noticed that?

Why is that? Because the things that the other people are doing convict them of what they're not doing anymore. This is a great study in human nature. If you were in a psychology class, he would have some 50,000-word term for it. If you were in a theology class, he would have some 50,000-word term. I just take it out of the Bible and a saying that everybody always likes to throw around: it's real simple, "Birds of a feather always flock together." Ever hear that from your mother? That's out of Revelation chapter 19, by the way.

Birds of a feather flock together. When somebody gets out of fellowship with God, they don't like to be around people that are in fellowship with God because it reminds them of what they used to do or they're not doing, and it's just too uncomfortable for them. Then they search out in Christianity other people that are as miserable as they are, because the other old term my grandmother used to say is, "Misery loves company." So they all kind of hatch up together and live off each other's misery, I guess, and feed off each other. That's just the way it works in the study of human nature. It's a science in itself of human behavior.

We all have people and things in our lives that if we're going to allow somebody into our inner circle, that they have to match up to. I'm not saying it's a bad thing at all. For years and years and years, in all the ministries that I would build, pastors would come in and they'd say, "Boy, I don't understand how you get this to happen. You've got a class here of a thousand people, and you've got guys that are—there's a couple down there that's 90 years old, here's a couple here that's 70 years old, they're everywhere throughout your class. And then you've got 30-year-olds, you've got 20-year-olds, you've got 19-year-olds. You've got an age group that is just, I don't know how. How do you get all those people to get along together? They're so—I mean, what does a 20-year-old have in common with a 90-year-old?"

They were looking at it differently than I was looking at it. Truth of the matter is, when softball season comes around, if you're 90 years old, you're probably not going to sign up. When volleyball season comes around, you're not probably going to sign up for that either. When the boys get their basketball league over here where they play at No Hope or New Hope and all that stuff, you're probably not going to sign up for that. You're just not. But here's how people think. When it comes to ministry, and this is very important, my philosophy about life and the ministry and dealing with people is this: truly, I know that any social group, whatever age you are, you all gravitate to your own age groups.

In most churches or most ministries, they put the emphasis on the activities that people do. They have all the things for people to do, and then it's a thing where somebody says, "Well, you know, the older people say, 'Well, I'm not going to that class because I like the Bible teaching, but it's all geared for this and it's all geared for young people and geared for this and geared for that.'" Of course, then you have a problem with that. I never geared my ministries toward any particular activity that we did. I always geared my people toward ministry.

Maybe a 20-year-old and a 90-year-old don't have anything compatible on a volleyball court or the basketball court or the softball field, but a 22-year-old and a 90-year-old can minister together in the same scenario. When you put the emphasis on ministry and not activities, the social groups find their own little water levels where they all just go to. When you put the emphasis on the activities, then they all get into little groups and no ministry ever gets accomplished.

In other words, the thing that I look for, and the thing that I build in, and understand that everything we do here isn't about the activity, it isn't about the social event, it's about the ministry that comes out of it. It's about getting a bunch of—I tell my softball coaches and my volleyball coaches, I said, "Think of it like this: don't think of it as you've got a softball team trying to figure out how to win people to Christ and witness to people to Christ. Think of it this way: you've got yourself a church, and you're going to figure out how to play softball." Just reverse the process. The number one thing is ministry, and ministry knows no age boundary.

In my life, when I look at things and my criteria for friends in my own life, you've been around me, I'm a fun guy. You invite me to something at your house, whether it's a little kid's birthday party or it's a big kid's birthday party or whatever the case, if I don't have something planned that can keep me, I'll be there. You know why? Because I like a party, that's the way I am. The more to eat, the better. I like hanging out with people, I'm a people person. But I'm not under the illusion that when I hang out with people, I'm always on the prowl. I'm always looking for somebody that will fit into my ministry and understand that maybe there's somebody that can really benefit and help me as much as I can help them.

When I think of friends, when I think of people that I'm close to, it's people that share the same passion for the Word of God and for the ministry and for the things of God that I do. Those are the ones I have fellowship with. It doesn't matter, we can do whatever. We went to the air show a couple of weeks ago, took John over there for his birthday, John Busquet, the famous French preacher. We took him to the air show for his birthday, and a bunch of guys went, and it's fun. I'm having a good time, walking in all the planes and seeing everything, and watching the planes fly around. In the middle of all that, I hear the guys talking about something they studied in the Bible last week. That's what I'm talking about. We're at an air show, has nothing to do with the Bible. We're 100 miles from Old Path Baptist Church. We're out in the middle of a tarmac, 25,000-foot runway, B-17, B-24, B-1 bombers, everything in the world there. Enough hot dogs and nachos and big Broski sandwiches to put you in hog heaven for the rest of your life. In the middle of all that, we just can't get away from talking about the Bible. That's where I'm at. I like to do all things that are fun.

For me, it's Proverbs 27:17. This verse says:

Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

That's what I'm looking for. I want people around me who are going to sharpen my countenance. I want people who are going to be around me, they're going to help make me better, not help make me worse. I want people around me that are going to sharpen my countenance, and maybe I can sharpen theirs. That "iron sharpeneth iron" thing, that's put in the time period where it was where they had iron, they didn't have anything to sharpen it with, so they took the iron, another piece of iron, and they sharpened that iron with another piece of iron. It's exactly a picture of where we ought to be as Christians.

The people that I want in my life that are my friends, we all have criteria for it. You have a criteria for who you allow to be your friend. It's okay, it may be different than my criteria, that's my point. I'm trying to show you, everybody has a criteria of how we choose friends. In my life, I want people around me that are going to keep me fresh. I want people around me that are going to keep me sharp, that my hanging out with them and them being in my world is going to be something that I'm going to be better for. They're going to strengthen me in my relationship with God.

There's people in this church that you come over and see me on a weekly basis, or I have time with you that we go through things together, and you leave my office up there and you think that I—and you all say it, you say, "Man, that really helped me out. Thank you so much for helping me. You really helped me figure that thing out. I love you so much. You really helped me get all this thing down." And you walk out of that office and you have no idea that you did more for me than I did for you. That's what Bible friends are supposed to do.

I hope every time I'm with you one-on-one, I hope every time we're together in some scenario, I hope that every time that you and I bump up against each other and do something together, I hope that when we leave and part, I hope I leave you better than I found you. That's my goal, and I want people around me to do that for me. I don't want anybody around me to always try to bring me down. I don't want people around me that are always complaining. I don't need that. I can complain if I want to.

I have certain things in my life that I look—I'm a person that, and this, don't take this personal, this is just me. I can't stand people that are late. I'm a very punctual person. If I say I'm going to be there at three o'clock, I'm going to be there probably at five or three, probably been driving around for 15 minutes. But I just can't stand people that are late. We were in Romania one time, and I told everybody we were going to the airport at 10 o'clock, and I had some malingerers who always held up everybody else. We're in a foreign country, and I had their passports. You know what I did? I left them at the hotel because they were 15 minutes late. Went on to the airport, and I had their passports. They weren't going anywhere. I taught them a lesson, and those same people were never late again. Never late again. Of course, they're still in Romania, I don't know how they're doing now. But it just drives me nuts.

I can't stand disorganization. My wife's back there going, "Oh yeah, you gotta see our bedroom." I know where she's going with this. But I'm a great organized person on the other end, the most disorganized person in your life. But I guess I'm organized where it counts, as far as I'm concerned, anyhow. But I can't stand disorganization. I can't stand dysfunctionality. I can't stand people when they get up in the morning and they're still planning what they were going to do yesterday. I can't deal with that. That just drives me nuts. If you ever see me in a situation where I'm over against the wall like this, and I've got my hands across my chest, and one hand's holding my lip, it's because I'm in a situation and I want to say something, but I know I can't say something, so I'm just biting my time and biting my tongue. We all have our quirks. Those are my quirks. Bible says, "Confess your faults one to another." Here we go, where I'm at.

I can't stand procrastination. It just drives me nuts when somebody says, "Yeah, I'll do it," two weeks later haven't done it, three weeks later haven't done it. I can't stand people who borrow stuff and never give it back. You know how many books I've lost to some of you crooks out there that have got my stuff? I'm stupid, it's my own fault, my own fault, because I won't write your name down if you took a book. You know why? Because I'm the ever-forgiving, ever-loving, ever-trusting. So you're ripping me off left and right. Your libraries are filled with books. If you looked in the flyleaf, it says, "Bob Alexander, this is his book." You're a crook, you still have this.

I like people who do what they do when they say they're going to do it. That's just me. It's a thing where you have your own criteria. My point is this: God has a criteria for Him having friends. You have yours, I have mine. Mine are goofy some of them, yours are goofy some of them, but that's where we're at. We have to love everybody, but you have a criteria by which you allow people into your inner circle. You may even allow people into your inner circle, but to become your close friends, they're going to have to line up with what you like.

Some of you guys, and I appreciate this, most of us are KU guys, and Sean's Missouri, but we still let him come to church. Sean's my friend. I got to say, Missouri played pretty good ball yesterday, didn't they? I'm switching over a little bit there. But I'm not talking about things like that. It's a thing where when it comes down to things in your life, you have a right to have a criteria, and all I'm saying is God's got a criteria, and I want you to see what that is today.

Let me say that I'm going to give you the answer when we get here a little bit, but I want the reality of this. We sing the song down at the mission a lot, and sometimes we sing it here, it says, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." That's a great song. I would like, Baba, I'm going to commission you, alright? Could you sing that down the mission? You sing it good, you sound like—have you ever seen Cool Hand Luke? You never saw Cool Hand Luke? Oh, Baba, how many people have seen Cool Hand Luke? Oh, Baba, I'll tell you, Baba, hey, forget it, Baba, you're done, you're out, man, out, out, out. Remember the song of Cool Hand Luke there, the guy on the guitar? What song was he singing in that movie? What was the good hymn that he was singing when all the people were coming and visiting their people in prison in the farm there? He was singing "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

I love that style. Every time I hear that, I think of those prisoners in there who are locked up for life, and yet the fact that somewhere in their life they're reflecting and they heard their old mama singing that song, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." Baba sings it like that movie, that's what it reminds me of. I'm going to commission you to write a new song. Take the song "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" and then write an anti-song to it that says, "What kind of friend is Jesus having in us?" That's the real issue. Certainly, it isn't the issue of what a friend we have in Jesus. The real question is, what kind of friend is Jesus having in you and in me? That's the question.

I talked to you a while back about Amos 3:3. It says:

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

How do you become God's friend and walk with God without having God's passion, without having God's heart, without having God's vision, without having God's work? All of this is found in the study of a man named Abraham, who starts out Abram and comes to Abraham, and then who comes to the point where he, in the process, fulfills God's will, plan, and His work, and he becomes the friend of God. His life is a record for you and for me. It starts in Genesis chapter 11, and if I remember right, it ends in Genesis chapter 25, around verse 7 or 8.

Here we find his journey through life. Here we find not only his journey, we find our journey. What else do we find in here? We find not only his struggles, we find our struggles. What else do we find? We not only find his failures, we find our failures. What else do we find? We not only find his sin, we find our sin. We not only find his lack of faith, we find our lack of faith. But ultimately, what we find is not only his victory, but our victory too. Because here's a man who started out called "high father," he had to go through some things and learn some lessons. God changes his name, and he comes all the way to the place in his life where he becomes a friend of God.

I told you last week that years ago, as a young Christian, I was so moved by Truman Dollar in his series on the life of Abraham that when I took those things—I was just a young guy, and I remember doing some work out at the church camp that we had, and I was doing some work out there, I was off, and I was doing some work out there, and I had a little tape player, and I would listen to those tapes over and over and over and over again. They were such an impact on my life.

When I began to do my own study time around them, like many of you do, I broke Abraham's life down in what I believed were the three areas that really gave him the victory and brought him to the place where he was God's friend. I already told you about Abraham, Abram, and a friend of God, not talking about that, that's another study. When I broke his life down to three areas, and those are the three areas I want to look at tonight that I believe today that made him the friend of God.

- His attitude toward his relationship with God.
- His attitude toward people.
- His attitude in giving himself to God.

I didn't say his attitude in what he did for God, I said his attitude in what he did for God. Let me say this, I'm going to give you the answer before and then we're going to work back to it. The number one thing that you have got to understand if you're ever going to be God's friend—this is the criteria for God as far as the Bible's concerned, and certainly as far as Abraham's concerned—this is the criteria for you ever becoming God's friend. This will set a context for you, and right now, as soon as I'm going to say this quick, because I want to have total silence in the room, because I want everybody to hear at one time all of our little bubbles burst. Because the reality comes home that we think we're God's friend, but what it really takes, and understand what it took for Abraham to get to that point, it's understanding in your own life the concept of sacrifice. That's what it takes to be God's friend. How many of us today really understand that?

II. The Concept of Sacrifice

How many of us today, me included, how many of us today really understand the concept of being God's sacrifice and understand the sacrifice that He was for me? Remember when we started our church? I took you on a study in Nehemiah, and remember I told you about the nine gates and the walls? I told you how that our church is—that's a picture of what our church should be—and the doctrine around that city, that city being the church, the walls around there was the picture of the doctrine that protected this church.

I showed you how that in that city of Jerusalem, when they rebuilt those walls back there, Jerusalem was in a shambles. It was a picture of New Testament Christianity being in a total shambles, and what God is doing is that God back then is rebuilding His city. What we were doing is taking and building a church, and before they ever started the city, they put up the walls. You know why? Because before you ever do anything in a church, you've got to know what the church believes. We talked about the basic concept of the walls being a reference to the doctrine this church believed.

In that wall, in what we believe, there were nine gates. Those nine gates represent the different ministries in this church. You remember that, most of you that were here. What was the first gate that we talked about? The first gate that is listed there, called the Sheep Gate. The Sheep Gate was the gate where they brought the sheep in that were going to be sacrificed. Remember back then I told you that the number one thing that God looks at in any church, and the number one thing that determines a church's value to God, its usability to God, and its power with God, is: does the church ever get to the place where it understands what sacrifice really is? I told you that. Here we are, five years later.

Obviously, the church as a unit will only be as plugged into God and understand the concept as individual people do. Obviously, at the end of the day, everything rises and falls on leadership. It all will be what I do as far as laying it out for you. Take your Bibles and turn to Romans chapter 12, if you would, for just a moment. I want to show you this thing and lay this out. Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. We get into Romans chapter 12, we're going to have a great time with this, but I want to look at it today.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The number one thing that you and I need to have is to understand this. We live in a world that likes to pretend it's a reality world. So when you go onto TV, you find what you find: reality TV. We live in a world that likes to pretend that you listen to Bill O'Reilly, and he's got what he calls the "No Spin Zone." That simply means, or is supposed to mean, that when you get into his world, that it's reality. Reality TV means it isn't cooked, it isn't canned, it's reality. Of course, you find reality TV and a "No Spin Zone" in every place but in God's people's world. We all live in a spin zone, and we all don't deal with reality very well.

The thing I want you to see here is this: God never asked you to die for Him. He never did. It says here, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." That's what He wants. He became the sacrifice on Calvary's cross, and He died for you. He died for you so you wouldn't have to die for Him. Now, I'm not saying that you won't get killed or martyred someplace down the line; if that's the way it goes, that's the way it goes. But that's not what the concept of Christianity is. He died for you to be your sacrifice so you could live for Him and carry on the work that He didn't get finished, because He by design wanted you to finish it out. But just as He was the sacrifice on Calvary's cross for you to become a Christian, you have to be the sacrifice for Him in carrying His Word and doing what God wants you to do.

You know why some of God's people don't? Look at verse 2: "And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed." Remember I told you last week that Christianity is not a conforming, it's not a reforming, it's a transforming. How do you transform yourself? Look at it: "by the renewing of your mind." That comes that you have to begin to think a new way. You don't think the old way. You keep thinking the old way, and you're going to get messed up to the place where you just—you've got to start thinking a new way. You've got to start changing how you think by renewing your mind.

Look at this: "that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." You and I have something to prove in your life. You and I have something to prove. To a lost and dying world, we have something to prove, and what we are to prove is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. In other words, question you the hope of glory.

You know why people don't do that? Look at verse 1: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." You know why God's people today don't become those living sacrifices? I'll tell you why in a heartbeat. You know why God's people get saved and live their lives and never meaningfully ever learn the real meaning of sacrifice, therefore never really becoming God's friend? I'll tell you why. They simply think that it's unreasonable for God to ask them to do that.

Oh, it wasn't unreasonable for God to send His Son down to die on the cross. We're all glad about that. But it is unreasonable for God to ask you, after you get saved, to put aside the things in your life and fulfill God's plan for your life. That's unreasonable. When you meet a child of God, whether he knows it or not, she knows it or not, or they admit it or not, if they get saved and don't fulfill through the process of time, they don't get to the point where Abraham is. At some place in their journey, they have come to the conclusion that really giving God everything and really turning your life over to God and turning everything over, changing your way of thinking and everything that has to go along with it, is simply an unreasonable request by God. That's where you're at. God says it's a reasonable service. We come to the point where we think it's unreasonable.

Then you know what we do? We stack all the things. You know what we do, don't you? We stack all—when you want to buy something and you really know you probably shouldn't buy it, but you really want it anyhow, you know what we all do? We start to think of every reason why we should have it. I've had people that bought houses that they never should have bought. You know, but they want the house, they can't afford the house, maybe probably the rest of their life they're bouncing checks like they're Harlem Globetrotters, but they've got to have it, they bought a house, they want the house, and you know how they justify it in their mind? "We'll use this house for ministry." That's not a reason.

We find a way of justifying whatever we want to do. That's what we do. We find a way to get around it, and when we can't do it, can't get it done, we find a way to get it done and then build around us the support system, the false one by the way, that makes us feel good about the decision we just made. That's how we all do it. Just what we do when we in our mind intellectually say to God, "I think what You're asking me to do is unreasonable."

I had a guy that came to church here for a year or so, and he was a nice kid, but he always had some struggles, and he just wasn't really ready to flip that switch. He quit coming to church a couple of months ago, and one of our guys ran into him and asked him where he'd been, and he said, "You know what?" He said, and you're going to hear this a lot, he said, "You know what? I can't get to where you guys are at. I just can't give up everything that I've got to give up. I just can't get where you guys are at, and I feel bad every time I come."

Let me re-translate that for you. I don't know French, and I don't know Spanish. I know a little bit of German, but I translate Christian really well. Let me translate that for you: "I'm saved, came to your church, Holy Spirit of God got in my heart, worked me up one way and down the other side by the way I'm living and not what I'm doing, but I have come to the conclusion that it just was not a reasonable thing for God to ask me to do that. So I'm going to go where I feel more comfortable, which is nowhere, and I'm going to build in my life all those things that I think are going to make me happy. Five or ten, fifteen years from now, when life is ruined and it's a mess, it will all come back to that bad decision of not dealing with the reality, because some child of God who thought it was reasonable for God the Son to die on the cross and agonize for him, you thought that part was reasonable, but your part of giving back to the sacrifice, you thought was unreasonable." That's where we're at. That's exactly where we're at.

III. Abraham's Attitude Toward God

Let's look at these three areas, and to help this, we're going to use a contrast. I'm basically just going to—now we want to go back to Genesis now and turn back to Genesis chapter 18. I want to look at these three areas, and we want to look at them from a contrast standpoint. We're going to get a reality check here on how Abraham got to be God's friend. I already told you it comes down to understanding sacrifice. Let's look at this thing.

Let's start with his attitude toward his relationship with God. Look in Genesis chapter 18. This is about Abraham here. Abraham now is on the plains of Mamre, and it's a hot day, and he's sitting in the shade of the tent door. Let's pick it up here. We're going to study now Abraham's attitude toward his relationship with God. Let's see some parallels.

And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;

And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,

And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:

Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree:

And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said.

The first thing I want you to realize is that this is Abraham after God has changed his name. He got his name changed in Genesis 17, and now he's in Genesis 18, and now he's Abraham. But there are some great things I want you to see here. I don't mean to get theological on you, because I want to keep this light and fluffy today so you can all grab it. I don't mean to get Bible on you, but let me ask you a question: how did he know that was the Lord? Three men came.

Without getting into a great theological dissertation on it and getting deep on you, you know that all angels look alike. The Angel of the Lord, which is Christ in the Bible, looks just like the other angels. I say it all the time, remember me telling you that if Jesus Christ walked in that door and the devil walked in that door, and Christ walked up here and stood here and the devil walked up and stood here, I told you many, many times you couldn't tell them apart because they look the same. They are created beings, created in God's image, even though one has fallen.

If the devil walked in that door and Jesus Christ walked in that door and they stood up here, you couldn't tell them apart except one way. So here you've got two angels and the Angel of the Lord, or Jesus Christ in an Old Testament appearance before He got His human body as the Angel of the Lord. Those three angels look exactly alike. Angel number one looks like angel number two, and angel number one and angel number two look like the Angel of the Lord number three, Jesus Christ. They look, they're indistinguishable. They didn't show up and have little name tags like Mormons that said, "I'm Angel One, I'm Angel Two," and the other one says, "I'm Jesus Christ,

the Angel of the Lord." They weren't wearing T-shirts that said, "I am Him, the real thing, Coke." No, it wasn't that way.

How did Abraham, who saw three—put it in easy terms for you—three sons of God, one of them was the Son of God, two of them were sons of God—how did Abraham look at those three angels, one of them being the Angel of the Lord, who look exactly alike? How did he discern which one was the Angel of the Lord? You notice he didn't shoot a scattergun like we would have done and said, "Angels or Lords." He said, "Lord," singular. Out of those three who looked alike, he discerned which one was the Son of God. That's a question. That thing drives you nuts. He recognized, in the crowd of the sons of God, he recognized who God was.

I'll tell you something else, look at verse 2: "And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them." He was excited at the prospect of spending time with God. He ran to Him. It wasn't like, "Oh, God's here, I'm going to have to go spend some time with Him." He ran to Him. He couldn't wait for the prospect of having time with God. I'm telling you, the prospect of spending time with God was so important to him that he wasn't going to—he wasn't going—he had an apprehension about it. He ran to it.

I look at Christians today, and it's true here too. We are no different from other churches in a lot of ways. We've got the Bible, and we believe the Bible, and we've got a lot of good people, but some things just never change. Some of you still think that the church service starts when the preaching starts. When the song service is going on, you're out there talking about everything else in the world up and down the hallway. You're getting all your business done and just letting God's business go undone until you think what is important for you in God's business. That's not a criticism. That's a reality. It's no wonder some of God's people don't get anything out of the message. "Well, I didn't get that." Well, I guess not. You're still thinking about what you were talking about before when you should have been preparing your heart and letting the Word of God minister to you through the Word of God.

If there's anything we do right, we don't sing goofy songs. "Pine tree, pine tree, pine tree, pine tree, pine tree, pine tree, pine tree, pine tree, pine tree, oh, pine tree. Second verse now, which will be pine tree. Hallelujah, hallelujah, oh, hallelujah, oh, what's it to you?" There's substance to what we sing anyhow. "Am I a soldier of the cross, a cross the bloody seas?" That's got power to it. That's a lot better than "pine tree." You've got to hear the third verse of "pine tree," which is great: "Pine tree."

It doesn't start when I come up and say, "Open your Bible." If it's going to start anywhere, it's going to start when, "Let's take up the offering." That's where I'm coming from. But we get the idea that when you want it to start is when it starts. I've got things on my agenda that, "Danny, could you just stop singing for another five minutes until I get this recipe down?" I'm saying, he ran. Nothing was going to get in his way. Nothing was going to get in his way. The prospect of spending time with God.

I don't understand some of you. Bless your heart, I know if you're sick, you're sick. You've got people that come even when they're sick, and I appreciate that. That speaks well of your character, as long as you don't have any communicable disease that's going to give it to me, give

it to everybody else. But I don't understand the concept of staying up late on a Saturday night and then looking at a sunny morning when the alarm clock goes off and saying, "Oh, I'm too tired to go to church today." I don't get that. I guarantee you, if you had Chiefs tickets this afternoon, if they were playing in town, you could be up all night long, you'd be there. In other words, we get where we want to go.

You know what your life ought to be on Sunday morning, Saturday night? You ought to be out there doing whatever you're doing, and you ought to look at that thing and say, "Oh boy, oh boy, well, I thought tonight was fun. Boy, tomorrow's church. I'm really excited." You're going to get home and you get to bed, you've got to go to bed at 8:30 because you're so excited to be here in the morning, it takes you two or three hours, flopping back and forth before you finally get off to sleep. You get up in the morning and you've got anticipation. You're in there, and you're in the shower, and you're up there, and your water's coming down, and it's hot.

Have you ever noticed how people sing in the shower? Do you know why that is? There's a science behind that in the Bible. You know why people sing in the shower when they don't normally sing? I'm telling you why, because the Bible says that the water coming down is a picture of the Second Coming in the Millennium, and the Bible says when the water comes down and Christ comes back, the picture of the Word of God, the whole world breaks out into singing. So you're in that shower, and you're scrubbing yourself, and all of a sudden it's around. "Yasto te no. Yasto te no." Your wife pulls back, "What is going on with you in there?" It just comes over you. When I'm in the shower, it just hits me. I think I'm in the quartet. I've always wanted to sing in the quartet. I need three other guys to hide my bad voice. But I'm in there, and I don't know why, but when you're in the water and the steam's coming up, your voice does sound better than it does like here. I'm not sure why that is. Another way I'd ever seen before church is they had a shower here. Of course, he put one in a new building over there, so maybe that's how we'll do it.

So you're in there, and you're just singing around. You know why? Because that's a picture of the way the whole world's going to be when the water of the Word of God drenches this planet. I don't know if all that's true or not, but I just thought that you ought to know that when you get in the shower, something takes over. That's a picture of the Spirit of God taking over your life. You ought to get up in the morning and you just ought to have anticipation. You ought to get in the car and say, "Come on, kids, we're going to church." When you get here, you ought to be just cruising this place, dump your family out, park down here, walk in here, and you ought to be just slobbering with anticipation of what God's going to give you today.

We gave all we had last night, didn't we? Drag in here, come into here, walk around like you've been baptized in dill pickle juice, shaking your hand and your ass asleep. When He saw God, the chance to have time with God, He ran to Him. Nothing more important to Abraham than His relationship time with God.

I want you to notice this: he bowed himself before God, reverence and submission. He said, "My Lord." He knew exactly, singular. He knew exactly which one of the three was the one he wanted to fellowship with. Genesis 18:4 says, "Get a little water," the cleansing of your feet, "rest in the shade of this tree." That's a great picture. I know if you're saved this morning, the Holy Spirit of

God resides in you, He indwells you, but does He rest in you? Or when you turn over to Ephesians chapter 4 where it says, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit," is that you and my picture there? Abraham and his attitude toward his relationship with God, it's easy to see how he got to the place where God says, "He's My friend," because Abraham just wants to spend all the time in the world with God.

We talk to some of you young kids for a minute who have boyfriends and girlfriends. You spend more time on your phone with your girlfriend or boyfriend than you do talking to God. You spend more time in anything in this world than you do with God.

IV. Lot's Attitude Toward God

Now let me show you the contrast. Flip over to Genesis chapter 19. We're going to look at Lot and his attitude of relationship, or I guess I should say lack of.

And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground;

And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.

This is one of the greatest telling passages in all the Bible on God's relationship with us and the illusion that we think we have one.

And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground;

And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.

The first thing I want you to see is, keep your finger here, come back to Genesis 18:22. Just flip one page back. This is where we're still going back to Abraham.

And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

You know what you've got? The Lord won't go down to Sodom and Gomorrah. He's not going down there. He stayed with Abraham. Where Lot is living and what Lot is involved in, there will be no fellowship for him and God, so God doesn't bother to go. You know what the illusion is? Lot doesn't even know the Lord's not there. He basically says the same thing that Abraham says, except there are only two guys here, and these two guys are real angels. The Angels of the Lord stayed with Abraham and wouldn't go, and Lot couldn't even tell the difference. Where one had the discernment to pick God out in a crowd, the other one can't even tell when He's there and when He's not. There's a reality for you.

Now watch this. It looks like it's the same, but watch this. Here's where he gets the—he kind of covers all the bases. This is racist and sufficient. Genesis 19:1: "And there came two angels at Sodom and even, and Lot sat at the gate of Sodom, and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them." First thing, no running. He just rose up to meet them. "And he bowed himself with his face toward the ground, and he said, Behold now, my lords." See, his is plural. Abraham was singular. He couldn't discern who it was. He just knew it was somebody spiritual. So he's covering the bases. He said "lords." Abraham said "Lord." Did you know that Abraham's is the uppercase letters, like I taught you a couple of Thursday nights ago? This one's lowercase letters. That means something in your Bible.

He says, "Come on in, come on in. Stay here tonight. Stay here tonight. No, no, no, I insist. Stay here tonight. Then get up early before nobody sees you and be on your way." See that thing? Abraham never wanted Him to leave. Abraham said, "Pass not by. Stay here. Pass not away. Stay here." What a difference. Abraham says, "Pass not away." His attitude toward his relationship is, "God, I don't ever want You to leave." Lot's relationship is, "Well, You're here, come on in, hide behind the door of my house, and early in the morning get up and get on your way." See the two attitudes?

To so many of God's people, God is just, when you have a need, He is a convenience. When you don't have a need, let's face it, He's an inconvenience. Let's be honest. One of the greatest lessons I ever got taught in my life was from an unsaved man. When I was in the army, I was a long way from God. I was at the station at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, about as far as you get away from anywhere. Nice place, but it was just nothing around. Boston was 60 miles in, and what we had right there outside the gate was Fitchburg. The name says it all.

A guy there lived up in Providence, Rhode Island. Of course, you know anything about New England, everything is pretty close. He said, "You know what?" We had a long weekend, and he says, "I want you to come home with me." We were buddies. He said, "I want you to come home with me. Everybody has a three-day pass. You are going to be stuck here by yourself. Come on home with me. My parents will love to have you come." Well, I said, "Okay, let's go." So I drove with him up to Providence, Rhode Island. He lived, a nice kid, family was Roman Catholic. He was Roman Catholic. Put me up in their home. Went out, took me out, we all went out to dinner on Friday night and had a great time Saturday. I was, they gave me my own room, it was kind of a jaysh and everything.

On Sunday morning, I'm sleeping, half asleep. Everybody's up. I hear the conversation between this kid, can't remember his name anymore, and his dad. They were, and you get into Providence, Rhode Island, they're in Massachusetts, you're into some old-time Catholics. The churches looked like the old cathedrals of Europe because they'd been around there forever, and that's where it all kind of started. It was, I mean, these guys were staunch Catholics. No criticism, they just were staunch Catholics. I was about as out of fellowship as you could ever find in your life.

I heard the conversation between this kid and his dad. His dad was going like this, "What do you mean he's not going to church with us this morning?" And the kid said, "Well, Dad, I don't even know if he even believes in God." And Dad said, "Well, I don't care. If he stays in my house, he's

going to church with us next time. Now maybe he's not going this time, okay. But if he ever comes back, you tell him that he's going to church with us." Now I heard all this. You know what I did? I still had enough common sense. I said, "Well, they've been good to me. I don't care. I'll get up and go to church." So I got up, walked out. I didn't pretend like I heard the conversation. I walked out there about five minutes later and I said, "We're going to church today?" And I went to church.

I never forgot that. There was an unsaved man who thought more of—nothing was going to stand in his way to get to church on Sunday morning. As far as I know, he was lost and on his way to hell. Here I was, a backslidden Baptist in his house, and he's telling me—I'm a saved man, he's a lost man—he's telling me I need to be in church on Sunday morning. I never forgot that. I hear some of you sometimes, and this is not a criticism, I just, live and learn, man. Some of you get people to come in and stay with you, outside relatives, from time to time. I'll say, "Well, I missed you last week. Where were you?" "Oh, I had friends come in town and relatives come in town, and we..." I'll kid you and I'll say, "Well, why didn't you bring them?" Well, I understand sometimes you have maybe things in the morning you can't bring them, but not always.

You know what I do? When my in-laws came to our house, when we were younger, and they came in from Ohio and they weren't saved, you know what the standard policy was? The standard policy was, "Hey, you know what? We're going to go to church in the morning, and we'd love to have you go." "Well, no, I don't think we're going to go. I don't think we're going to go." And then, you know what my response was? "Well, that's fine. The coffee's over here. There's bagels over here, and there's breakfast food here. We'll be back about 1:30, and then it's all hooked up and go to lunch." Bottom line is, nothing can keep me from being here, because nothing's going to keep me from having my appointed time with God on God's people. Nothing. I don't care who you are. I don't care if you come in when you've got a million-dollar check for me and I'm backing out of the driveway. Well, in that case, I might just pull in and pick the doors one more time.

Somebody's going to come into your world, and I'll tell you. I know you don't see this because you're a young Christian, most of you. Some of you are older Christians, you're just dumb. But I know you don't see this. You don't see the fact that the greatest testimony you could give a lost person who's in your house is the fact that, "Wow, they think so much of going to church. They're going to leave me here and go to church." Now they may not like it. They may say among themselves, "That's stupid." But inside, you know what the Holy Spirit of God is saying? "No, that's not stupid. That's not unreasonable for the sacrifice that God made for them."

You know what they say to you? I guarantee you. If they know you're a Christian and they know you love God, I guarantee you. I know human nature, been chasing it for 40 some years. You know what they say? You don't go. They know you're a Christian. They know Sunday morning you go to church, and now you're not going. I guarantee you what they're saying in their bedroom, in their room, in their bathroom, in their car, in their closet door when they leave: "So she's a Christian, huh? So he's a Christian. Didn't take much to keep them from going to church." See how the devil works it?

I just made up my mind. Hey, you know what? We're glad you're here. We're going to church in the morning. We'd love to have you come. "Well, I don't think we..." "Okay, no problem. You don't have to come. Coffee pot stays on two hours after it's on. The bagels are in here. There's cereal in here. Don't touch the Twinkies, but you've got this, you've got this, and you've got that. Help yourself. Back about one o'clock, and we'll all go to lunch together." Nothing's keeping me from what God's having me for. I can't speak for you. I'm speaking for me. But that's where it's at. That's where Abraham was. What a difference between him and Lot. Abraham says, "Pass not away." Lot says, "Be on your way." I love it.

V. Abraham's Attitude Toward People

Now let's look at the next one. Come over to Genesis 18 again. Let's look at his attitude toward people. In Genesis 18:22, it says that the angels go to Sodom and the Lord stays with Abraham. What you have here is they get into a conversation, and the Lord tells Abraham that He's going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. This puts Abraham into a panic mode because Abraham knows that Sodom and Gomorrah is a wicked city. He also knows that in that wicked city is his son and his nephew Lot, his wife, at least four daughters, and at least two sons-in-law. He's concerned. This is one of the greatest pictures in the Bible of your prayer life and my prayer life. What it does in Abraham here, it shows his attitude about and toward other people.

Look at Genesis 18:23: "And Abraham drew near." This is after the two angels leave, and Abraham stands before the Lord, and they get into this conversation. Now he knows that the two angels are going to Sodom and Gomorrah to wipe out that city. Watch this. Oh, I love it.

And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?

That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Let me tell you what's going on here. The two angels are on their way, and Abraham now knows he's sweating. He's saying, "Wow, God's going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah." So he comes to the Lord and he says, "Hey, Lord, how are You doing today? Great day, isn't it? I heard You're going to go down and destroy Sodom. Let me ask You a question: if there are 50 righteous people down there, if there are 50 saved people in Sodom, are You going to kill those 50 saved people along with everybody else?"

Now look what he does. He kind of gives God His own medicine. I love this. Look at Genesis 18:25: "Be that far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" He put it right to Him. That's the kind of relationship that he has with God. Many of you don't understand that. You see the same thing with Moses and God. The Bible says Moses spoke to God face to face like a man speaking to his friend. Moses and God had some really

good cussing matches. Now I know you don't believe that, but that's going to happen in the Bible long enough.

There are times that Moses came in and he's saying, "Oh, blankety-blank people." He said, "I'm just going to wipe them off the face. I don't know why You just don't kill them all. They're just the worst people in the whole wide world. Now they're doing this. Now they're doing that. Now they're doing this. I don't know why You even mess with them." God, what don't You do? God said, "Now Moses, now Moses, now Moses, now Moses. Take it easy, take it easy, take it easy. Oh, I know they're—they give you a tough time. They give Me a tough time, but you know what? They just, we bear with them. It's going to be okay. Just hang in there." Moses said, "Yeah, You're right."

Next day God comes in. "Well, I'm going to wipe them all off. I'm going to kill every one of them. They just—they're just terrible. I'm just going to wipe them out. I'm going to take them people and just hang their heads on poles. I'm going to put their bodies out in the sun, let the birds eat their flesh. I'm going to kill every one of them, every man. I'm going to give their canary some disease that they all die and fall off the perches. I'm going to kill everybody, and I'm just going to wipe them out." Moses said, "Now come on, Lord, take it easy, God. Hey, take five. Imagine Moses telling God to take five. Take a big breath. Oh, don't do that. You'll suck in the whole universe. Just, just, just, just, just take it easy. Just take it easy. Just take it easy." That's the relationship that I'm talking about. Some of you laugh at that and you think that's funny. It is funny, but it's also true, and most of God's people can't ever get to that. You know why? Because you're not God's friend. You're not God's friend.

There are things you can say to people that are truly your friends, and you can vent to and you can bleed off steam to, that you can't say to somebody who's not your friend. You better not, anyhow. That's just the way it is. This is incredible. So what happens down here? God knows there's not 50 people. Abraham hopes there is, but he doesn't think so either. So what happens from Genesis 18:26-32 is what I call the old countdown. After he got Him in verse 26 to say, "Okay, if there's 50, I won't destroy it." Then Abraham drops the bar. "How about if there's 45?" God says, "Oh, we're playing this game. Okay. There's 45." And then he said, "Okay, how about if there's 40?" "Okay. If there's 40." "Okay, Lord, now we're going to make a big leap. How about if there's only 30?" God says, "30, and I won't destroy this city." "Great. How about if there's only 20?" "You got it." Genesis 18:31, "if there's only 20." Then Abraham says, "Okay, Lord, now look, You are the God of the universe, and You are the greatest God in the world, and I love You, and You're my friend. But how about this? How about if we only find 10?" God kind of looked at him and smiles and says, "You got it. If I find 10 saved people down there that are righteous people, I won't destroy the city."

You know what Abraham's thinking? Here's what he's thinking: "You've got Lot, there's one. His wife, there's two. You've got two daughters at home, that's four. And then you've got at least two other daughters who have two husbands. That would be four, five, six, that's seven." You know what he's thinking? Lot's been down there 20 years, folks. He says, "Certainly he's got his family, and certainly he's got three other people in 20 years that he's won to Christ." That's how he's thinking.

But you notice this? You notice how he's grown? You know how he—back in Genesis chapter 14, when Lot got in trouble? Remember when the Sodomites came and got him and took him down there? What did Abraham do? He got an army of men, and he went after them, and he saved Lot and brought him back. You notice he isn't going down to get him out now? He's staying with the Lord. He learned some things. Millions of people are about to die. Sodom is going to be wiped off the map, and he is burdened because of the fact that his nephew and there are people there that don't know God who are going to die and spend an eternity in hell, and he lifts up a petition toward God because he's got the right attitude toward people.

VI. Lot's Attitude Toward People

Let's see the contrast. Come to Genesis chapter 19, and let's pick it up in verse 3. Now remember, they're in their—he got—they didn't want to stay in the house. If you know anything about Sodom and Gomorrah, Sodom and Gomorrah was a place of Sodomites, queers, homosexuals. The whole city is wicked. Remember now, the angels don't want to stay in Lot's house. They want to stay in the street. This is a great passage.

And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round about, both old and young, all the people from every quarter:

And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.

Word had spread. Word had spread. "Bring them out that we may know them." I don't want to get graphic here, but that doesn't mean, "Hi, my name is Bob. Your name is Mr. Queer. Good to have you here. Thank you for being in town." That's not what I'm talking about. It wasn't this kind of knowing that you want to shake hands and say, "Good to have you in town. We're the Sodom welcoming committee, and we're men of the community's festival, and we just want to come in there, bring a little bottle of wine, say welcome to our city." That's not what they're looking about. That's not the knowing that we're talking about here.

And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him,

And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.

Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.

Lot went out at the door unto them and shut the door after him and said, "I pray you, brethren." Brethren. He's in Queer City where everything is absolutely—and the people that he's got that are God's angels, the men of Sodom have come in to break down the door and to take them and have sexual relations with them. He goes out and stops them. No wonder he closed—the Bible says he closed the door behind him—and says, "Brethren." What an insight into where his

attitude is. Look at Genesis 19:8: "Behold, I have now two daughters which have not known man. Let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do them as good as your eyes. Only these men do nothing therefore." What a value system. That's called rationalization. One sin is wrong, but the other sin is right. That's where he's at.

Finally, down here in Genesis 19:12-13, they're going to destroy the city, and they get Lot out. When they get Lot out, they say, "We're going to get this thing, and we're going to destroy this city. You got any other family in town?" He says, "Yeah, I've got two daughters and their sons-in-law live across town." The angel says, "You better go get them, and you better tell them we're going to destroy this city, and we're going to get the whole mess out of here." The Bible says that he goes over.

And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.

Let me add what's not here because it got cut out of the originals: "And Lot went out and got into the station wagon and drove over to his sons' house." He spoke as to his sons which married his daughters and says, "Up, get you out of this place for the Lord will destroy this city." But he seemed as one that mocked. He had such a rotten lifestyle with no impact on his family. He not only didn't have 10 righteous people, he didn't have any. His own kids, when he came to them and said, "I've got a message from God," they said, "You? Well, the last person on earth we would have thought would have a message from God was you. Hit the road." There's a difference between commanding your family like Abraham did and not commanding your family.

It's an incredible thing. But it gets better. Look at Genesis 19:16: "And while he lingered." I love that. "And while he lingered." A little bit later on, in Genesis 19:25-26, while they're moving out, his wife lingers. They're moving over the mountains, and they're coming through there, and it's rough going, and they're all pushing along, and she's behind. She's way behind. She's saying, "Oh, oh, where are we going? Oh, oh, I lost my house. We just moved into that house. That house was beautiful. That was the \$2 million house. And I was supposed to host the ladies' garden party there tomorrow," and all this and all that. She's lingered. Lingered from behind. And she looks back and takes one last look at Sodom. What's the Bible saying? God turned her into a pillar of salt.

You know what? It's that last look that'll kill you. When God gets you out, you don't look back, folks. Don't you get that? Don't you know when God sets you out of that place, you don't look back? Don't you know that Paul said, "not looking behind but pressing forward, toward the prize, the mark, or the highest calling of God"? Don't you know that every time you look back, you will linger? Most of you can't get that. Most of you are lingerers. "While he lingered," he's not even in a hurry to get out, and he knows judgment's going to fall.

That's a great counseling principle. It's a great truth about Lot and about his wife. Because you begin to realize, ladies and gentlemen, the real problem here, the real problem—and this is true in dealing with people—people are going to come to you, and you're going to work with people with me, part of this work, and you're going to have people come in with problems. The thing

that you've got to realize is simply this: the problem here wasn't getting Lot out of Sodom. The problem here was getting Sodom out of Lot.

We think that changing geographical locations solves our problems. We think that a new dress, a new car, a new this, a new that will make what you feel bad about go away. Physical things never take care of spiritual problems. The problem here wasn't getting him out of Sodom. The problem was that he was in Sodom, and Sodom wasn't going to get out of him. You know what he needed? He needed his mind renewed. He needed a new way of thinking.

I like this. Look at Genesis 19:17-20.

And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord:

Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die:

Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.

Lot said unto them, "Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no." You know what? I love people. I love people that when they're—when they've got all kinds of—you're going to find this. They've got all kinds of problems. They come in and tell you their problems. They're unhappy, and they don't like what's going on. They've got all kinds of catastrophes in their life. The moment you start to help them, who have no answers for their life, you're going to see this. They come in: bad marriage, broken up, all kinds of problems, problems with kids, problem this, problem that. You say, "I can help you." "Oh, great. Praise the Lord. Let's do what we've got to do." As soon as they start feeling better, they do the same thing that Lot does. They start telling you what they're going to do and what they're not going to do. What do you need me for? If you knew what to do all along, why are you wasting my time for the last four or five weeks? Just fix it.

But that's a mark for people like Lot. Lot's got himself in the biggest mess. He lost his family, except the two girls. His wife just turned into a pillar of salt. He's got more in his mind of telling God what He ought to do and what He ought to not do. Look at Genesis 19:19: "Behold now thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast showed upon me in saving my life unto me and saving my life. And I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil shall take me. And I die. Behold now this city is near to flee to. It is a little one. Don't let me escape thither and it shall not, and my soul shall live."

Millions of people in Sodom are becoming marshmallows at a roast. They're being burned. They're being killed. Millions of people. God's judgment is falling on Sodom and Gomorrah, millions and millions of people. He lost his sons-in-law. He just lost his wife. He lost two of his

daughters that didn't go. All he can see is himself. Attitude toward other people. You're not in this church if you're going to get in ministry. You're not in this church to serve yourself. You're not in this church in ministry to do it by your timetable or your schedule. The attitude toward people is seeing people like God sees the people. I'm telling you, the key to being God's friend is these three things in your life.

VII. Abraham's Attitude in Giving

Lastly, we're going to look at this, and then we're going to be done. Here we go. Let's look at his attitude in giving. Back to Genesis 18.

And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:

Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree:

And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said.

And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.

And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hastened to dress it.

And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

Abraham speaking, "And said, My Lord, now if I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away I pray thee for thy servant. And a little water I pray you be fetched and wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will fetch a morsel of bread and comfort ye in your hearts. After that ye shall pass on. Therefore ye are come to your servant. And he said, So do as thou hast said. And Abraham hastened to the tent under Sarah and said, Make ready quickly three measures of meal. Fine, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran into the herd." Notice he's running, everything he's doing here. "He ran into the herd, fetched a calf, tender and good out of the herd, and gave it to the young man and said, dress it. And he took butter and milk and the calf which he had dressed and set it before them and stood by them under the tree and they did eat." Now you've got cakes, you've got steaks, you've got butter, you've got milk, and Abraham says, "This is just a little morsel of bread."

VIII. Lot's Attitude in Giving

Let's see Abraham, let's see Lot. Flip over to Genesis 19 real quick.

And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom:

And Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; and he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and

tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.

And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and and they did eat.

"And there came two angels of Sodom at even. And Lot sat in the gate of Sodom." Notice he's in the gate. The gate is where the hotspot is in the city. The gate is like the bus stop for all the pimps in New York City when he got all the young girls coming off the buses and got them into the prostitution in the sixties and the seventies and the eighties. The gate of the city is where the action is. That's where he's at. "And Lot seeing them rose up to meet them and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground and he said, behold now my Lord, turn and I pray you to your servant's house in tarry all night and wash your feet. And he also rise and go on your ways and he said, Nay, but we will abide in the streets. And he pressed upon them greatly and they turned into his house and he made them a feast and did bake unleavened bread and they did eat."

You see the contrast? What he calls a feast is unleavened bread. Do you ever eat unleavened bread? Unleavened bread is the ungodliest stuff you'll ever eat in your life. It is bread without any leaven in it. It was only to be used in certain sacrifices in the Old Testament. It's the bread that nobody ate unless you had to, as far as a sacrifice was concerned, and that's what he's serving them. You see, Abraham gives him the best he has, and his attitude about it is, "It's a morsel of bread." He takes a morsel of bread, gives it to him, and says, "Whoa, look at the feast." See the attitude? It's different. The difference is giving God your very best versus giving God what nobody wants and keeping the best for yourself. That's what it is. It's exactly what it is.

IX. The Ultimate Sacrifice: Abraham and Isaac

Now, I want you to see the end of his journey here. Take your Bible and turn all the way over to Genesis chapter 22. We've come through a great progression in his life. We don't want to miss this. I told you early on, the key is sacrifice. Look at this.

In Genesis 22:1-14, you've got one of the greatest stories anywhere in the Bible, and it is a story of Abraham offering up Isaac on the altar. Let me explain this story to you. We're not going to read it for the sake of time. Let me explain it to you. Abraham has come to the point where now he's God's friend. To prove he's God's friend, God is going to test him on his sacrificial abilities, and He's going to take the very thing that Abraham dreamed about, the very thing that Abraham waited for, the very thing that God promised Abraham, the very thing that Abraham loved. In fact, it says in the passage when God tells him that He says, "Take thy son, whom thou lovest, and get into the mountains of Moriah where I tell you to go, and there I want you to offer that boy up as a sacrifice."

So, you know what Abraham does? He does just that. He gets the boy, a couple other guys to go with him. He gets the wood. He gets the knife. He gets everything he needs. The Bible says he has a three-day journey. What do you think went through Abraham's mind those three nights? When he was sitting around that campfire late at night, and it's kind of chilly, and little Isaac snuggles over to him, puts his arm around him, and he puts his down around little Isaac. Little

Isaac looks up and said, "Daddy, I sure do love these trips we take together. I love you with all my heart, Daddy." Knowing inside his heart, in two days, he's going to give that boy on the altar and kill him and give him to God. What do you think went through his heart? The next day, and they're down there in the same thing. He sees that boy right in front of him, and he's thinking, "I've got to kill that kid in one more day. God, what are You doing? God, You brought me this far, gave me this seed, gave me what I prayed for. You said it was going to be a seed to the nations, and now You're going to have me kill him. I don't understand it. I don't like it. I don't understand it, but I've learned to trust You."

So they got to that place called Mount Moriah, and they got that thing down, and he built an altar. Isaac's looking around, and he said, "Gee, Daddy, we're going to make a sacrifice." And he said, "That's right, son." And he said, "Well, Daddy, You said there's the fire and there's the wood for the fire and there's the altar, but where's the sacrifice?" Abraham looks down with all the wisdom of Solomon, with all the prophetic mustering in his heart of the great promises of God. He looks down and he says to that young boy, "Son, don't worry, God will provide Himself a lamb."

You want to talk about commanding your children? Never stop and think about this. Isaac was probably 15 or 16 years old. Abraham's at least over a hundred years old. At least a 16, 17-year-old kid to a hundred-plus-year-old man. The Bible says that he bound him. Don't you think Isaac got a little nervous when he took out the rope and said, "Son, put your hand behind your back," and started to tie his hands up? Do you see anywhere near where Isaac fought him? Do you see anywhere where Isaac doubted his dad? Do you see anywhere where Isaac ever just said, "Well, you ain't going to do this"? Do you think that Isaac couldn't outrun a hundred-plus-year-old man? The point is he didn't, ladies and gentlemen. He stayed there because he trusted his dad. He had a relationship with his father, and Abraham had learned how to command his children. So when he said, "Let's tie you up, Isaac," he said, "Daddy, whatever you want." Some of you can't even get your kids to come to church.

He took the rope and he tied his hands behind his back, and he laid him on that altar. With tears running down his face, he pulled that knife out and he said, "God," he said, "if this is what You want, You got him. You've never failed me. And I believe even if I kill him, I believe You'll bring him back to life." So he took that knife back, and as that knife plunged down, the hand of God stopped that hand. God Almighty cried from Heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham, it's all right. I wanted to see if you really would give him to Me after you wanted him so desperately for yourself, because there's going to come a day when God Himself will provide a lamb, and I'm going to make the eternal sacrifice. And I just want you to know if you're going to be My friend, will you make a sacrifice for Me like I'm going to make for you?"

Oh, dear friend, oh my God in Heaven, you must see that today. God will always trust you with the thing you love. He will always test you with the thing that you love of your desire. He sees if you love it more than you love Him and you're willing to give it up for Him. What are you not willing to give up for Him today? That's your question. That's my question. You want to be God's friend, the key is sacrifice. The key is sacrifice.

X. Lot's Ultimate Failure

Before you get too teary-eyed, let's look at the context. Let's look at Lot. Now we want to come back to Lot. We'll look at Genesis 19:30.

And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.

And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth:

Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.

And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose.

And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.

And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose.

Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father.

And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day.

And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Benammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day.

"And Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt on the mountain and his two daughters with him. And he feared to dwell in Zoar for he dwelt in the cave. He had his two daughters and in the firstborn, said unto the younger, Our father is old and there was not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth." Oh, really? This is what I call rationalization of your circumstances. God wiped out one city. There are still 4.5 billion people on the planet of the earth, but there's no man on the earth now who I can get married to.

You know when I see that? I see some of you young girls get hooked up with one goofball guy, and he dumps you, and then you think life is over. He was the only guy in the world. You don't see the fact that God took him out of your life because he would have messed up your life royally. All you can see is, "Oh, what am I going to do?" I had a girl one time, a young kid years ago, and she got broken up with her boyfriend, and her mom and dad were in a mess, and all these things. She sat in my office. She said, "I just can't." She said, "I love him. I love him. I love him. I love him. I can't live without him. Don't you understand?" I said, "You know what I understand? I understand that it'll be your attitude toward God in your life and not this kid. Did you ever say to God, 'I love You, I love You, and I cannot go on without You?'" Probably not.

"And the firstborn, verse 31, said unto the younger, Our father is old and he is not a man in the earth that can come into us after the manner of all the earth. Come let us make our father drink wine. Probably didn't need the wine, tell you the truth. Come let our father drink wine and he will lie with him and we will preserve our seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night and the firstborn went in and lay with her father and he could perceive not when she lay down or nor when he arose. And it came to pass on tomorrow that the firstborn said unto the younger, behold, I lay yesterday night with my father. Let us make him drink wine this night and go in thou and lie with him as you may preserve our seed."

Now I want you to see the progression here. When the parents don't do what's right, when the parents don't command their children, when parents don't do what's right, the first one growing up, the oldest one, the firstborn, they go sour. Now you compound your problem because not only is your doing not what's right compact the firstborn, it now impacts the next one. If you see this passage here, you'll find that the younger one got drawn into it by the older one. The older ones will always lead the way. Mom and Dad, you're the older, you ought to lead the way. When you don't lead the way, your firstborn will come up, and then they'll lead the way. If you have four or five kids, the next one will come up, and they'll lead the way. It'll be the wrong way unless Mom and Dad start commanding their children.

Lot went in to talk to his sons-in-law and says, "I've got a message from God," and they thought he mocked. Why when you go to your kids and you say, "You need to do this," or "I want you to do this," and "You need to do this," and "You better do this," and "You better not do this," they just look at you and don't listen to you. You know why? They're mocking your very advice. "Who, you? Look at your life. It's a train wreck. Look at your life. You're going to tell me what I shouldn't do when you can't even get out of my message. You're in." They mock you. You're too stupid to see it.

You know what you've got here? It's either on the altar of God or it's incest in a cave, but it's one or the other. Abraham comes in a place where he was willing to sacrifice his very son on the altar. Lot was so out of touch with reality, his two own daughters got him drunk, sexually involved, and then produced Ammon and Moab, the two nations that destroyed the nation of Israel and to this day are fitted to destroy him again.

XI. Lot or Abraham?

Now, the reality bubble ought to be broken for just a few seconds. I feel this is like the movie Independence Day. I have just broken into the mothership, and I've got a virus down inside the mothership which has dropped the shields. Now all over the world, we just got a small moment of time to bring down the mothership. Before this time, it was blocked up. Now because I started a virus, the shields are down, and we can attack and wipe out the ships. That's where we were at today. We came in here with the illusion we were God's friend. That illusion for the moment is gone. I only got a small window, because by this afternoon you'll have rebuilt the shields. But right now, while the shields are down, right now while you're vulnerable, right now when the Holy Spirit of God won't let you lie to yourself anymore, let me ask you a question in this moment of time before the shields come back up: Are you a Lot or are you an Abraham? Am I a

Lot or am I an Abraham? Am I really God's friend? Do I really understand what He did on the cross, and then what I'm going to take my life and I'm going to put it to Him? A living sacrifice is what it takes.

When you understand the sacrifice that God made for you, you realize that He requires the same sacrifice of you, but it's a living sacrifice. You realize that God is a God. It's a sacrifice of you, but it's a living sacrifice. You change the way you are. You change the way you think. You do not find it's unreasonable to make your life count for Him and put everything else on the back burner.

Let me just say this before I'm done. I know I went long today, but if you don't think this wasn't worth it, then fire me and get somebody else next week. You young Christians, remember what I'm saying to you. The danger in a message like this with a crowd like this is that the ones that are doing really good take it to heart and beat themselves up. The ones that need to take it good, it goes right over the top of their head, and their arrogance and pride think that they're above all of this. My caution to all you young Christians is simply this: you're doing really well. You're on your way. Don't think that what I'm saying this morning I take with you with a grain of salt because of the fact that you're coming along. I watch you grow. I watch you see what is happening. I watch how God is changing in your life and as you're moving along those lines.

Some of you, God's already in the process of changing your name. Some of you, there isn't a chance in hell today that you're ever going to go back to the world. Some of you are still balancing back and forth. But most of you, you've been there, you're here, you see what God's got. I see the change in your life, the change in your attitude. You're fresh, you're young, you're not caught up in all the crap that goes on in Christianity. You don't have a bunch of kids that are out in the world. You're still just single or just you're newly married and you're working on it and you're getting there and you may have some baggage but you're on the right road and you will make it. My greatest fear in a message like this is the ones that don't need to take it directly will, and the ones that ought to be going outside and laying prostrate on the ground this morning will never get it.

Being God's friend is to understand the price that He paid for you, and then you with the rest of your life paying that price for Him. By doing that, fulfilling God's will for your life, God's plan for your life, and God's work for your life. My friend, that's exactly what it means to be God's friend. It doesn't mean because you come to church. It doesn't mean because you give God what's left of your life. It doesn't mean that you tip God on the offerings. It doesn't mean that you give lip service to God. It doesn't mean that you walk around this church presenting yourself like you're some great Bible student when you couldn't get your own life where it needs to be.

It's about you coming to the place where you realize that what He did on the cross for you, what He did for me, it deserved my very best. It doesn't deserve what I have leftover. It deserves the very best that I have to give. It deserves every ounce of my strength, every ounce of my passion, every ounce of my love, every ounce of everything that I've got. Anything other than that is simply unreasonable. I go back to Romans chapter 12, which represents your body, a living

sacrifice unto God, which is your reasonable service. What we find so unreasonable today, my friend, God finds reasonable. I'll leave it at that.

Next week we get into Romans chapter 5, and it all changes. We'll look at the doctrines. The bottom line is this: you've seen two men now, two men that illustrate what you and I need to be. One of them was a man after God's own heart, the other one was God's friend. The only way you're going to be a man or a woman after God's heart is to love the Book like David did. The only way that you're ever going to become God's friend is through that Book. You learn that your life is not your own. God made an eternal sacrifice for you, and now He requires you to make the one for Him. That's simple. Are you a Lot or are you an Abraham? You have to decide. I already know what I am. You have to decide.

I'll tell you what, 35 years ago when I looked at that and I heard that message and I wrote this thing down as a young man, and I failed God many times, and I'm not even pretending that I didn't, but in that time in my heart I said to God, "You know what, God, that's it. I ain't ever going back. I don't care what happens. I don't care what they do to me. I don't care what anybody says. I ain't changing and going back. I may fail You. I may fall, but there'll never be a day that I don't fall that I will not get up that same day and move forward again. I'm not ever going back." That's where we need to be today.

I'm telling you, I told you when we started this year, we preached on it, "Year of the Bible." Boy, the "Year of the Bible" sure thinned the things out, hadn't it? That only takes like a year of the Bible after five years, and then you designate, "Okay, God, we're serious now. We're going to go to this. We're going to do this. Let's see who we've got. Let's separate the men from the boys." Boy, the "Year of the Bible" sure cleaned the whistles out. That's what God does so well. That's what's exciting about you young ones growing up.

You know why this world likes Obama so much? I don't know what your political affiliations, I have none. Personally, I think Obama's an empty suit. But you know why the world likes Obama? I understand it. You know why the world likes Obama? Because he at least represents a freshness that this country is tired of the staleness. We've got the good old boys in Washington. We've got the lobbyists. We've got the good old boys that they're in there. They're seated. They're enrooted. They're making millions of dollars. They're making all the little deals. We're paying for it. We're sick of it. We've got illegal aliens. We pay taxes. They go to school and they get it free when your kids have got to pay to go to college. It's all backwards, and we're sick of it. I'm sick of it. I don't know about you, but I'm sick of it. This country's sick of it.

So they see in Obama somebody that is different than what is in Washington, even though he's really not. They see a freshness. Somebody who their hopes are pinned on because they're looking at somebody that gives the illusion that you're going to change things and make it better for me and make it better for you. So everybody looks at him, and he's got the right things that he says. He looks what we expect. He's young. He's not been tied into the things. He's not been a corrupt politician for all those years. He's only been a corrupt politician for a very short period of time. He looks like he's the freshness that we need, even though he's not.

When I look at you young Christians in here, I look at you in the biblical way. I look at you as the freshness that this church will always need. I look at you younger Christians. I'm not saying just 17, 18, 19, and 20. I'm talking about the people that have come in. Maybe you're in your 40s and your 50s, but you really want to plug into the Word of God. There's a freshness about you. There's a reality about you. There's a fact about you. I've got people to come over to my office that honestly, I don't know what to tell you. If I told them, "All right, I want to find God." "Okay. You want to find God. Yeah, Bob, how do I get a hold of God? Just tell me what to do." "Okay. Go stand on your head in that corner for 45 minutes, and then after that, stand on that corner for 45 minutes, and I'll be back." You know what they do? They would go from corner to corner to corner if that's what they do. They're that stupid. Boy, that's the way God wants you. They haven't learned to play the game yet. They haven't learned to try it. They're still honest about their sin. They're honest about their relationship. They haven't learned to play the game yet like so many of us have. They haven't learned yet to project one thing when in actuality we're something else inside. They haven't learned that yet. They're fresh, and you're fresh, and you're the lifeblood of this church, and God keeps bringing you in, and my job is to get other people around here to help bringing you up. That's the lifeblood of any church. That's the greatest thing this church has going for next to the Bible.

But it comes down to this: Are you a Lot or are you Abraham? If you're going to be God's friend, you're going to have to learn what sacrifice is. Every head bowed and every eye closed.