

Romans 12:1-2

Sunday 11/15/2009

SEC: The Importance of Applied Scripture

We just finished the three chapters that deal with Israel in the prophetic sense. I told you last week, and I've told you time and time again every time we're together, the real key to our Christian life is the Bible itself, the Word of God.

I grew up in churches and grew up hearing pastors in an age of Christianity where, as they were departing from believing the Bible, their sermons and what they taught and told their people reflected their attitude about it. I remember, just as sure as standing here this morning, hearing preachers across this country getting up in pulpits and telling crowds of people, four or five thousand Christians, that getting saved would basically solve all your problems. Then they would get up and talk about the fact that reading the Bible would solve all of your problems. That's much of an oversimplification of the issue, and it's just simply not true.

But after you do get saved, let's face it, you do have the potential to solve all of your problems. Simply getting saved is not going to solve your problem any more than going out and buying a grand piano is going to make you a piano player. I can go to Sears and Roebuck, go into the Craftsman shop where they sell all the tools, and I can buy all the tools a mechanic needs to fix a car. I guarantee you, after I have the tools, you still do not want me to fix your car.

Just getting saved won't solve your problem any more than reading the Bible will solve your problem. That's a fallacy I think we fall into today as God's people. Simply reading the Bible won't solve your problems, but after you do get saved, you have the ability to solve your problems if you take the Bible you read and you apply it. Applying the Bible to your needs, your life, and the things that you're going through is the only way to solve your problem. Our ministry here is based on teaching you the applications of the Bible. I am never interested in just giving you the cold, stark, hard facts of the Bible, but rather giving you everything that you need to understand how to apply it.

SEC: Three Practical Applications of the Bible

I don't know if you've ever thought about this, and we touched on this last week as we closed, but in a practical sense, putting the rapture aside, the second coming, the tribulation, the millennium, all those things that are very exciting to study, in a practical sense, just in everyday living, you apply your Bible to your life in simply three ways. It's these three ways that I want to begin to talk about this morning, and then I want to take the last aspect of it and apply it to the Book of Romans.

When I look at the Bible, when I look at my own life, when I look at the things that I try to do with my Bible, I try to break it down into a system so I can better understand it. When you look at your life from a practical standpoint, what does that mean? Everyday living. The things that you have to put into your life when you apply the Bible to get you through tomorrow, to get you through today, to get you through the issues that you have to deal with at work, and in your family, in your marriage, maybe in your own personal life. When you take all of the doctrinal

things and the historical things out of your Bible, you're left with three things or three aspects of learning the Bible in a practical way.

The first one we will talk about just very briefly, but I want to give you all three of them and get to the third one. That's where we're going to be today.

1. The promises of the Word of God. The promises of the Word of God are what God gives you that you can hang on to and put in your life as promises. Most of you, if you've come through our church ministry here and you came in with issues in your life that you wanted to solve, one of the things that we did, we've talked about this before, is you've got a little stack of three by five cards. Those three by five cards have on them certain verses that you need for where you're at in your life. You know what they are? They're the promises. They're the promises that God gives you in the Bible that you can take and absolutely apply to what your need is. There are Bibles filled with them. It's only limited by your ability to read the Bible and to see your need.

Philippians 4:7

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

You see, that's a promise to you and to me. One of the great ones in Philippians 4:19 is where it says:

Philippians 4:19

But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

You see, that's a promise to you. You can take that. You can mark it in your Bible. You can put it in your heart. You can carry it with you wherever you go. That is a promise that God has given you.

1 Peter 5:7

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Proverbs 3:5-6

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

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

See, that's a promise. Psalms 119, you want to learn the Bible? Psalms 119 is the longest chapter, the longest Psalm in the Bible. It just goes on and on and on. Every one of those verses in Psalms 119 is built on a promise to you about something about the Word of God. You find them in Isaiah. You find them in Jeremiah. You find them in every book of the Bible. So when you start to look at your life and my life from a practical sense, we apply the Bible in three ways, or we should. And the first one is the promises.

2. The second one would be commandments. Now I know that we live under grace and we don't think that we're under the law. We don't think that really the commandments matter to us, other than just understanding them and knowing that they lay down a very basic, fundamental aspect of life that you do well to follow. But that's not true. The Bible says in Matthew 22:40, Jesus Himself said that the whole law, all of the Ten Commandments and all of the law in the New Testament for you and for me, was compressed into two commandments.

Matthew 22:40

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

And it is called the royal law, called the law of Christ. Those two commandments are basically that you love God first and you love your neighbor as yourself. So there are some commandments that we have to follow. When you get into Galatians chapter 6, you'll find it as the law of Christ. When you get into James chapter 2, you'll find it as the royal law. So we have promises and then we have commandments that we have to apply.

3. But the third thing is what I want to talk about today and basically what we're going to focus on as we come through our last section in Romans. That'll be the basic facts of the Bible. We may call them the principles of the Bible. But the facts of the Bible, these are the non-negotiable things in the Bible. These are what I call the facts of the Word of God.

SEC: The Facts of Christian Living

I know this doesn't happen today. Some of you older parents, when I was growing up, it was common understanding that when a child grew up and got to the age of, I don't know, 13 or 14 or 15 and began to go through puberty and become aware of your sexuality and all of those things, there was a standard kind of a joke between us kids growing up, and everybody knew it, that there would be a time that your mom, probably your dad, would sit you down and tell you about the facts of life. We used to call it the birds and the bees. I have never in my life found out what the birds and the bees have to do with anything that goes on in that, but that's just what it was called. I remember that was probably, for a parent, the toughest thing that a parent had to do. I know when my girls got to that certain age, I had to have that talk with them. Today the problem is that when you sit down and have that talk with your child, they probably know more about it than you do at nine.

But it's one of those things where growing up, there was a time in your life where your parents sat you down and said, "You know what, I know up to this point you thought life was like this, and this is the way it all went down, and this is how it happened. But the truth of the matter is, here are now the facts of life." We as Christians, we get an idea about Christianity. We get an idea even about our own relationship with Christ. But what the Bible does, not only does it lay out the promises, not only does it lay out the commandments, but the Bible also lays out the facts.

The facts of the Christian life are non-negotiable. They are the baseline of Christianity. It's really where the issues of life are formed, are dealt with, and realized. The Book of Romans, I don't

know if you know this or not, and I know that everybody can make a promise out of something, I understand that. But if you want to put it in a category of legitimate promises, and I may be wrong on this, at least I've never seen one, I've not really found one promise in the Book of Romans. You know why? Because Romans is the book of facts. Romans deals with the facts of the Christian life. The Book of Romans deals with the things that we must know and understand to function properly as a New Testament Christian, and they're non-negotiable, and they cannot be changed.

Romans chapter 12, in particular through chapter 16, the fourth section we're about to go into, are the facts of how we should understand and relate to and apply to our lives the mind that God has given us, the Word of God, the principles, the facts in Christian living. Like I said, I've not found any promises directly as in the sense of the Book of Philippians or other places.

SEC: The Balanced Diet of Christian Growth

Your life and my life, we grow. I preach through messages on the seven stages of spiritual growth. I think one of the mistakes that pastors make if they don't see their people in that light, every time I get up to preach or teach a Bible study, or when you come over to see me one-on-one, or maybe in a small group, I'm always mindful that I have different levels of spirituality. I'm always mindful that what I've got to do is make it workable for everybody, not just the person maybe who really knows the Bible, but also those who are just beginning to get into the Bible. Your job and my job is to always keep growing as a Christian. Where we get into problems is when we quit growing. We've all had times in our life where we just kind of get out of the realm of things with God, and we know how stagnant that is, and we know how when we're in that situation that things don't go well, we don't have everything, we have no fellowship with God, and how miserable it can become. But we've all been there.

You and I need to constantly keep growing. To keep growing, just like in your physical body, you have to keep eating. The balanced diet for a child of God is basically three things. If you are paying attention to the way I structure this church and structure our ministry, structure my teaching, I'm always mindful of trying to give you a balanced diet. Many churches you go to, they'll focus on one thing. You'll find churches that the pastor doesn't know the Bible very well, then he'll focus on the practical things. He'll focus on faith and love and all of those things. If he doesn't know the Bible, he'll focus on aspects of grace, or the aspect of the things that are easy things to preach on about how we ought to love each other, and how you ought to love God, and how you ought to give grace to everybody, and all of those things. They're limited to what they can do because they basically don't know the Bible. So they produce a church that is just like that.

You as an individual, now this is a scary thought, but you as an individual will only be a reflection of me and what I teach you. If I look at you in a very shallow way, and I teach you in a very shallow way, then you're going to grow up as a very shallow Christian. It's just the way it works. I have never seen in a church scenario, and there may be an exception to this at some point, but I've never seen it. I've never saw any church where anybody ever grew past the leadership. It's one of those things where everything rises and falls on leadership.

Now you may have some goals for yourself, and I hope you do, but even that's not enough. You having goals for yourself simply isn't enough, because as a pastor of this church, when I look at you, I have to have goals for you. I have to have places that I want to see you go as an individual and as a church. That's why I spend so much time investing one-on-one with people, because that's the only way that I can realize that investment. But yet at the same time, you never should stop growing, and to keep growing you have to keep eating.

The Christian life, your balanced diet, there's basically three things.

4. You have to understand as a Christian the historical side of things. You have to understand the Old Testament versus the New Testament. You have to be able to relate to where you're at as a Christian. I told you before that everything, the number three in the Bible is the number of completion. Nothing is complete in the Bible without the third part. You can have two plus two, but without the answer four, it's incomplete. I've told you before that I can draw a line up here on this wall, and that line has three parts to it. It has a length, we can measure it this way, and then if you had a microscope or something, it has a depth to it. You cannot take one of those elements away and still have the line. My point is this, you cannot take one of these things out of your life and still keep growing. This is why I prod you, this is why I vary what we do, this is why I try to encourage you and admonish you to balance things out, and why I do the things that I do, because I understand that just giving you one little diet of this isn't going to make you a strong Christian. From a historical standpoint, let me tell you something, if you don't know where you've come from, I guarantee you, you don't know where you're going. To know where you're going, you've got to know where you've come from. If you don't know where you've come from and you don't know where you're going, please don't tell me you know where you're at. You've got to have all three pieces. So historically, you've got to be able to understand fundamentally where you fit into the world, how this church fits into what's going on and what God's doing.
5. Then the second thing is you have to have prophecy, the prophetic side of things, the things that are in the future. It's not enough to understand what's going to be or what's going to happen. You've got to understand what's already been. You've got to put it in that context. You're going to find that many, many churches, this is where they like to focus on. Prophecy is exciting. Prophecy, people like to, they look at history as boring, but prophecy is exciting. I've never understood that. To me, it's all in the same boat. Because if we lived a thousand years ago, what we're studying as history would be prophecy back then. It's all part of God's plan. You cannot separate the God of the Bible from the God of history. So when you look at it and you see it, those things are prophetic things. If I had a Bible study, and we've done this before, I remember one time on New Year's Eve, we talked about a number of things. We talked about UFOs one time. We talked about the Middle East and all of the things. And we packed that place out. But at the same time, if you'd get up and you'd say, "Well, I'm going to have tonight a study on how to walk with God and have a relationship with God," you'd have 20, 30 people. It's not exciting, see.
6. But you've got to have a balanced diet. You've got to have the historical side. You've got to have the prophetic side. But you also got to have the practical side. The practical side will be the promises and the commandments and the facts of life. The first two are easy. The third

one is really hard. You don't have to really have the right attitude or heart to study prophecy. You can sit and listen to it and get out of it what you want. Or you can listen to somebody lay out the history, like we did a history of the Bible the other night on Thursday night. That really does in effect. You can be way out in left field and still say, "Well, that was good." But I'll tell you what, when it comes to the practical, the first thing you've got to have to apply the practical in your life is the right attitude or heart. For you to get this one down, it takes self-discipline. It takes self-motivation. It takes self-control. It takes hard work. The third one will be filled with controversy and adversity. It's basically based on the things that we have to deal with in our own lives. It's a lot easier to study the rapture, second coming, than it is to get around the fact and dealing with things in our life that maybe affect us on an everyday level. It's a lot easier to deal with the history of the Bible. Oh, that's great. Or the second coming of Christ. Wow. But then when you have to deal with somebody in your world that you hate or that you don't like or that you have a problem with or you have to deal with some issue at work, if you have to deal with somebody in your family, maybe it's a husband or it's a wife, you'll find out that taking your wife back to 606 BC and explaining the time to the Gentiles is not going to fix your marriage.

Now we understand that your base Bible diet as a child of God is in three forms: historically, the prophetic side, and the practical side. We're going to spend Romans chapter 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 breaking down the practical side. No promises, no commandments, just the facts of the Christian life.

SEC: Romans 12:1-2 - A Call to Understanding

Now let's read it. He says in Romans 12:1-2:

Romans 12:1

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.

Romans 12:2

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.

Now, Father, we come to you today and first of all, Lord, we ask you to forgive us that each one of us in these few moments that we have here as we come to your throne before we open up and get into this passage. May each one of us realize that we have to be clean before you today. May we come to you this morning, Father, and ask you to forgive us where we have failed Thee. Put us under the blood. Give us the ability to understand. Open up our hearts to the Holy Spirit of God and let us understand this great section of the Word of God found in the Book of Romans. Lord, we as Christians, we deal so much with all of the aspects of what we believe to be Christianity, but very few of us deal with the reality of the Christian life. Today, we're going to begin the greatest section that lays out the facts of the Christian life, the non-negotiable items that we must understand to be used of God. Help us today, Father. Help me to apply it to my own

heart first and then teach it to others. Lord, we'll thank you and praise you in Jesus' name, for we say, for the sake we ask it. Amen.

That's a great verse. It's a great devotional verse. If you have a volleyball team at some point or a softball team as a captain, or somebody asks you to do a devotion, that's a great devotional verse. You take that verse and talk about, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," and then add verse 2 to it. It's a great 15-minute devotion. It's filled with stuff that you can talk about, and it's really a good standalone verse for a devotion.

But I want to today do something different. I want to take this verse, as we've done in Romans, and I want to put it in the context of the Book of Romans. I think that when we take this verse and put it into the context of Romans, and you see why it is in here the way that it is, it'll not only help you understand the whole Book of Romans better, it'll not only help you understand where you're at better, but next time you use it as a devotional, it'll give you a complete 360 understanding of how it all lays itself out.

Now, he says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren." As I've told you many, many times, there are some key words here we've got to look at. The first word I want to draw your attention to is the word "beseech." "Beseech" is to ask somebody for something very strongly, and you need to understand how he's using this word. And then the other key word here, when he says, "I beseech you therefore." I've taught you many, many times how important in English sentence structure the word "therefore" is. The word "therefore" will always mean that he's stating something based on something he has already said or laid out. So he says, "I beseech you based on what he's already said therefore, brethren."

Now, the first thing I want you to realize is this: he's not begging for you to do something. This is very important. He's not begging you to do something, and it looks like that when you take the verse as a standalone verse. But I want to tell you today, you put this verse in the context of the Book of Romans. He's not asking, begging, beseeching you to do something, but rather he's beseeching you to understand something. I guarantee you, I would never have to ask you to do anything for God if I could just get you to understand some things about God. If you understood about God what God wants you to know, there wouldn't have to be a man or a woman or anybody on this planet who would ever have to beg you to do something for God. So that's the first great point out of this passage I want you to see. He's not beseeching you to do anything, but he is beseeching you to understand something. That's where I want to focus this morning as we come down through this great passage.

"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."

Now, I want to put this into a context, but ask yourself this question: Why did he put the facts of the Christian life as the last section of the Book of Romans? We have just come through the Book of Romans in unbelievable detail. We've laid out every aspect of the New Testament concept of the church. We talked about how the Book of Romans formed for us the constitution of our Christianity. I've likened it to our legal documents that we have in our own government

that set down the standards by which we organize ourselves. It's our legal document from God for the New Testament church. That's why it's the first one after Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and Acts. Once he gets Israel out of the way and the church becomes established, he gives us the book of facts about everything we should know about Christianity. No commandments in it, no promises in it, just everything. I guess you could make a promise out of Romans chapter 10 where it says, "Whosoever shall call" in the salvation chapter, but that would be the only place.

Remember when we came through chapter 1, what did I teach you? I told you in Romans chapter 1 that it begins to lay out the mindset of the Gentiles. It began to show you and I how the Gentiles got into the terrible mess that they're in today. This is because God wanted us to understand the whole concept. In chapter 2, he shows us how the Jews got in their mess, and they're in the same mess. Coming down through chapter 3, he starts to lay out how the law and following your conscience, remember now the Gentiles in the Old Testament followed their conscience, the Jews followed the law, but he now begins to show you that you can follow that all you want and it's not going to solve the problem man has.

Then we got into the great chapter on chapter 4 and 5, didn't we? In chapter 4 and 5, we saw that the real key to solving man's problem, whether he's Jew or Gentile, is not following your conscience anymore or not following the law, but now in the New Testament, now in the church, the real key to this is basically getting God's righteousness. Then in chapter 6, 7, and 8, he talks about the great doctrine of the New Testament salvation. He talks about the baptism into Christ, which has nothing to do with water. He talks about the baptism of Jesus' death, which has nothing to do with water, but he lays out now how that now that Christ has died and rose again, how that once we get saved, we are dead in Christ, and he lays out the most incredible doctrinal stuff that we need to know. We went through all of that in great detail. In chapter 7, he took the time in a whole chapter to show us New Testament salvation versus Old Testament salvation under the law and how that you and I are dead to the law. Oh, chapter 8, the great chapter that talks about the two adoptions that you and I had, the adoption the day we got saved physically, spiritually, and the adoption that is coming when we get our new glorified body, we get adopted physically, and we went through that.

Then we spent an enormous amount of time in chapter 9, 10, 11, every aspect of God dealing with Israel based on the promises to Abraham and their future restoration, setting up for you and for me, not only our understanding of God dealing with Israel, but the fundamental doctrine of the Bible, which all the Bible was built on, and that is the pre-millennial return of Jesus Christ. And now we're in chapter 12, the great practical section.

So when he opens up chapter 12, this great section on the facts of the Christian life for you and for me that are non-negotiable, he says, "Therefore," he's saying based on what I've shown you so far in the Book of Romans, based on everything I've given you, I've given you the historical perspective, I've given you the doctrinal perspective of how you got saved, the glorified body you're going to have, everything that I've walked you through, and then I showed you how I'm going to restore the nation of Israel. I showed you how they got messed up, I showed you why they got messed up, and I also showed you I'm going to restore them in light of what I just showed you, in light of what I'm doing, in my plan on planet earth, in light of your understanding

of it, in light of your involvement in it. He starts to come down through here when he talks about four things, four things that we need to know if we're saved that set up the fundamental facts of the Bible that cannot be changed, and your whole Christian life and your success as a Christian is built on it.

We talk a lot about commitment as a child of God, and as we should. I'm totally trying to get God's people to get on board with the Bible. Very frankly, the concept of the church, the concept of a church is simply where God has a job that He wants all of us to do. What does God do? God pulls together around a pastor. God puts in that pastor's heart the plan, what He wants that man to do. God knows when He gets to that man's heart that that man can't do it by himself. So what God does is He talks about the forsaking, not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is. He gives the concept of the New Testament local church that men and women who are drawn to a particular pastor and understand the plan, they see his heart, get his heart and then get on board to help him do what God has called him to do and then in time God has called all of us to do. That's the concept of the church.

You're going to find, and I see this today very often, very many times why churches struggle so many times because when you start a church you can get a lot of rah-rah for about three or four years and then the newness wears off and then the pastor's faced with, "Okay, where do I go from here? How do I take this church from this level to the next level?" Very frankly, most pastors today, they're good in the rah-rah stage but when it comes with that reality of where we're going to get and when am I going to take the church to the next level? They have no clue how to get there and that's the problem today. That's the problem.

My job is to motivate you. My job is that every time I preach or teach is to paint some picture that you see that has some relationship to your relationship with God. My messages should not be about words. You don't see any big screens. You don't see any television thing where we put, list my messages down in the outlines. No, no, no. I don't want to give you an outline. Every time I preach I want to give you a painted picture that when you walk out of here that picture stays in your mind. You ever notice that you can go hear somebody preach and after you hear him preach you probably the next day can remember about five or six things that they said, maybe not even that much. But if you go and you watch a picture, if you sit down to a movie, you will remember vividly everything that you saw in that movie because it's a visual. We are visual people. When it comes to retaining and memorizing, we all have the same problem. We're tremendously inept at it, but we have the ability to see something and ministry preaching is painting pictures for people to be able to see. Some of the greatest sermons I've ever heard in my life that I heard 35 years ago that impacted me more than anything else. I could not give you the outline if my life depended on it, but I remember the picture the man painted and that's what it is.

Churches are a lot like hospitals. My job is to come to the point where we take people that come in and they're broken. In fact, when we get into biblical counseling, I tell you that when you deal with people you deal with them in medical terms. Dealing with people and their problems are three stages. I basically call them:

7. Broken arms and legs.

8. Appendectomies.
9. Heart transplants, brain surgery.

You can go into a situation with somebody that, you know, your kid falls down and breaks a leg, you take him to the hospital. It's no big deal. It's a little more serious when you have an appendectomy to have to take out your appendix. You stay in a hospital for three or four days. That's a little higher level, but it's really in most cases nothing to really get concerned about. But if you go in and your doctor tells you you've got to have a heart transplant or we're going to do brain surgery, hey, you're into some major things that you're probably not going to go home the day after that surgery happens.

Dealing with people and their problems is a lot the same way. You have some people come in and have little ouchies and those little ouchies are like broken arms and legs. They're easy to fix. You have some that come in and they have a little more harder situations. Requires a little more attention. A little more things have to be done. And then you have some that come in in the third level and, brother, I mean it's heart transplants and brain surgery. It's very complicated and the job of a church and a pastor is to come to the point where you get people to see about their commitment. That you solve their problems only for one reason. You don't solve their problems because of the fact that that's just what we do here. You solve their problem because everything is a means to an end. You help them get through their issues to get them focused then on understanding these great facts.

But just like in a hospital, not everybody that goes into a hospital makes it. There are some people who go into the hospital and they're very serious and they die and they never go home. There are some people that go in for minor things and when they're in the hospital complications happen and they die and never go home. Not everybody that goes to a hospital goes home. They don't make it and you know what, in the concept of the church and dealing with people and helping with the Bible, not everybody makes it. It's the same scenario and many times there's complications that set in. Many times there's problems that go deeper.

SEC: The Body as a Living Sacrifice

Be that as it may, the job of the child of God, and we talk a lot about a commitment as a child of God. We talk about surrendering your will. I hear people say, "Well, I want to give my heart to God." I've seen people when they're out of work and they learn a lesson about some things, and if God finally gives them a job, they basically say, "Well, I'm giving this job to the Lord." I've heard people talk about the fact, "Well, I'm going to give God my life." I've heard people say, "Well, I'm giving God all my possessions." "I've had control of them long enough, made a mess out of it." I've heard people talk about the fact that, "I'm going to give God my children." I've heard husbands say, "I'm going to give God my family." I've heard husbands and wives say, "We're turning my finances over to God." And you know what, those are all good things. I've heard people say, "I'm giving my marriage to God." "I'm giving my wife to God and He wouldn't keep her. He gave her back to me and now what I do?" Those are great things, but you know what, many times they just become the talking points of Christianity.

Do you know what God really wants when he says, "Therefore, brethren"? Do you know what God really wants out of your life and my life? He doesn't want your will. He doesn't want your heart. He doesn't want your job or your life or your possessions or your marriage or your finances. What he wants, my friend, is the number one thing. He wants your body. You can give God your life but keep your body to yourself. You can give God your finances and keep it to yourself. You can give God your heart and keep your body for yourself. No, based on what he said, "Therefore, brethren," based on what he said, what he wants from you and for me is your body. Our body. My body.

You know, as human beings, we're drawn to things that we see. When a guy, I don't know how it's true all the time, when a guy who's single and he wants to have a girlfriend and he sees this gorgeous girl and she's absolutely the most incredible girl, in a moment, in an immediate heartbeat, he is drawn to what she looks like. All his life he's grown up and formed in his mind the perfect woman that he wants to have and when he finally sees her from an outside appearance, in his mind he's captivated because now he has seen, he has visualized, there she is right in front of me. "I've got to have her. I've got to get her whatever it takes." There it is. And you know what, he never stops and thinks for a heartbeat what the woman looks like on the inside. I've seen women do the same thing. They wait all their life. How many times I've been in situations where they got married or they got into a scenario because this is, they saw the, as the Bible says, "man looketh on the outward appearance." But God never looks on the outside. God looks on the inside. We do that because we are drawn by human beings. We're visual people. We see things in perspective. We see things in color. We see things in dimension. We see things. We're very visual. It takes a transformed life. It takes changing your thinking pattern to not be caught by looking as it appears, but looking as it really is on the inside.

That's the bad side of it, but there's a good side to it also. It works for bad when you find a hot gal or the good-looking guy and you fall in love with what you see and then after you get married you find out it wasn't what you thought. But it also works to God's advantage when you let your body become a living sacrifice. I'll tell you why that is, ladies and gentlemen, until you understand what God is doing for you and is doing now in you, you'll never be effective. Until you realize that it's your body that God wants.

I told you guys a while back about the book on church history, Erdmans' Handbook to the Christian Church History of the Church, one of the greatest books I've ever read on church history. As I'm coming down through there and I'm reading these things, what he's doing, he's laying out, he doesn't even know he's doing it, he's talking about the hierarchy of the church and the men who set themselves up. He's presenting the church as in a Roman Catholic sense as the great hierarchy, that that's what a real church is. Then he's got all these other groups that are made up of what we know to be the Bible-believing people, and they're all these groups that are absolutely just getting out there and doing. He makes a statement that he doesn't even know that he made in comparison: the church hierarchy versus the personal witness. When he's talking about those Bible-believing groups, who he has no understanding of, who he looks at and they're an enigma to him, he cannot even figure out the rhyme or reason behind it. His whole mind has been clouded with the hierarchy of the high church. But he made this statement, "Wow, what a

statement!" He says, "In their lives, it was the personal friendships that formed the basis for them bringing people to Christ." He said, "It was the personal friendships that formed the basis for bringing people to Christ." Why? Because men and women are drawn by what they see, and when they see, I mean, you can say whatever you want to say, but you will live what you really are, and people see that.

So just as it can be used in a bad sense where a guy sees some gal he can't live without or a gal sees some guy she can't live without and then winds up making a mess out of her life, in a bad sense, if you will understand these four concepts in a biblical sense, you will draw people to Christ because it's your body he wants. It's your body he wants. You see some hot chick and you say, "Oh, I want her body." You see some guy, "Oh, I want his body." God sees you and he says, "Oh, I want your body," because God knows as well as I know that you can say whatever you want to say about how much you love God, but how you live it is really how much you love him. He doesn't want your life. He doesn't want your will. He doesn't want your heart. He doesn't want your job. He wants your body. Based on what he's told you, people will say anything, but they will do and live what they really are.

As I look out across this crowd and people that are not here today because you're out of town or they're sick, I can think of probably 40 people, at least 40, who came into this church who got saved not because of a sign that we have out front, not because of our website, not because we have some big ad in the phone book that guided them here. You know how they got saved? They got saved because they saw the change in somebody's life in this church. They saw the way they were and then they saw the way they are now, and they don't understand that. You know why? Because I'm telling you, God wants your body, and when you can understand that and give him your body based on what he's doing and what he's done, you'll be the greatest witness in the world for him. It ain't what you say, it's what people see in you. It isn't about how much you tell your wife you love her, it's how you treat her. We as guys, we're so stupid, and some of the gals, you're pretty dumb too. You think it's based on what somebody says. No, it's based on what they do. God figures it out quicker than we do.

Some of you have stopped drinking in your life and your friends see the difference, that your friends now know that you don't go to the same old places you used to go. Tell me you used to smoke and you stopped smoking. Somebody used to do drugs and you stopped drugs, and you realized that if you were going to be a witness for God, those things were just not going to be able to work in your world and still be a witness. "Here, I'd like to tell you about Christ. Let me get the smoke out of my mouth first." You realize there were some things that were just not going to work that had to go, and when they went and you were consistent in them going, that's when you're a witness.

I can't speak for you, I know my life. I'm the kind of guy that I'm either on 100 percent or I'm off 100 percent. I don't have any middle ground. The day so many years ago when I went down forward that night and I gave it all to God and I said, "God," I said, "I was smarter than to know that God didn't want my life," because I knew how I was living. I worked at the Hoover Company back then in North Canton, Ohio, and I was a fork truck operator. I went home on a Friday, and on that Friday, just like all the Fridays before and all the years before, I was telling

dirty jokes like everybody else. We were doing, I was doing everything everybody else was doing. I talked like them, I acted like them. We were all one big bunch. When I went to church that day and God broke my heart and brought me to the place and I got up off my knees that night, I didn't know a lot of things. I didn't know anything about the Bible. I mean, if you would have brought the antichrist down and introduced me to him that night, I'd have hugged him and said, "Thanks the Lord for all you're praying for." I didn't know anything about the Bible, but I knew one thing: I knew me, and I knew now that I could not be a sane person. I mean, I can't be halfway. Whether you like it or not like it, I always tell people, people either love me or they hate me. There's no middle. There's nobody you ever meet said, "Well, I kind of like that." We either say, "I love the guy," or "I hate the guy." That's just the way it is.

But I knew me, and I knew that if I didn't make a stand and I didn't change it immediately, then I could never go back on it, that I wouldn't make it. So that next Monday morning when we all had to punch in and we all got around for our meeting before we headed out to our areas on our fork trucks, I got all the guys together and I said, "Guys, I want to tell you something. I apologize to you. I have been a terrible testimony, and I want you to know that I got my life right with God this week, and I'm not mad at anybody, and I'm certainly not better than you. But I'm telling you this, I'm a Christian now, and I've got to do things differently. I love you. I'll help you any way I can. If you need help on your shift, you need help on your load, I'll do whatever you need to do, but I want you to know I'm going to be God's man from this point on. I left here Thursday night with dirty jokes in my mind and dirty jokes in my pocket, and I show up today with a New Testament in my back pocket and a packet full of tracts in my pocket, and that's the way it's going to be." They thought I was nuts. They laughed. One guy walked over and pulled out my pack of tracts and threw them up in the air, and I said, "Thank you for making my first tracting successful. Everybody pick them up." They thought I was nuts.

I knew me. I knew the way I was, and I knew that if I did not take my stand and did not give God my body, if I did not give God everything about my body, that it was going to be different, that nothing was going to change. I could stand up and say, "Oh, I've given my life to God," and live just like I was living before, but you cannot give God your body and be the same person. That's the beseeching, and he's not asking, he's not beseeching you to do that. He's beseeching you to understand why you should do that, because people will say anything, but they will live what they really are.

All right, now the first thing he says here is "a living sacrifice." My motivation in life is simply this: my motivation in life is very simple, and I know I've got a long way to go, and I am certainly not putting myself on any pedestal spiritually in any way, shape, or form. I'm telling you what my personal goal is in life. My personal motivation is to understand His every day, His sacrifice better for me than I may be a better sacrifice for Him. You know what I've learned in studying sacrifice? I'm going to tell you something, you can give God your mind, you can give God your finances, you can give God your life, you can give God your will, and never get to the point where you have to sacrifice anything. Think about it. Let's face it, most of us when we give our money to God, if we give it at all, we give it out of convenience. We give it out of the abundance. We give God what we've got left. We give to God what doesn't hurt us so we can still

go do our things, and yet we talk about, "Why, I've given my giving to God." No, you've given your giving to God on your basis. You've given your money to God so you can feel good about it, so you can still go out because you've got plenty of money, you can still go out and do everything your body wants to do.

I know that, and I'll tell you what, when I started to study sacrifice through the Bible, I found a place back there in 2 Samuel chapter 24, 2 Samuel 24:24, where David's back there and he gives the greatest statement on sacrifice that I've ever read anywhere in the Bible that formed the concept that no matter how I try to kid myself, no matter how I try to lie to myself or rationalize myself or justify myself, he goes in there and he wants to make a sacrifice for the Lord and he wants to buy this piece of ground to build an altar on to make a sacrifice. He walks up and he says, "I want to buy this," and the guy says, "You can have it." He says, "No, no, no, I want to pay for it. I want to buy it." The guy says, "Look, you just delivered a great victory. You're the king of Israel. You can have whatever you want, just take it." He said, "You don't understand, I'm making a sacrifice unto God, and to make a sacrifice, it must cost me something."

2 Samuel 24:24

And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

You want to give your body as a living sacrifice? What are you willing to give up? Because a living sacrifice means you give up some things. You know what it also means? It's easy to give up the things we know are the big things. You know what's really tough in my life, and if you haven't figured this out yet, I'm preaching this to me more than to you, but it's like throwing up, when a guy really splatters a big one, he gets all over everybody around him. So I'm throwing up a living sacrifice. It means you give up some things, and it's easy to give up the things that are really bad. How about giving up the things that aren't really bad but just hurt your walk with God?

1 Corinthians 6:12

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

You see, there are some things that I can do as a child of God that don't violate the scriptures directly, but the word "expedient" means they're not wise to do. They're not wise to do. "I will not be brought under the power of any." He says, "Get into the place in your life that whatever you do, whatever you say, wherever you go, you think of in the light of your body being a living sacrifice."

Hey, you know what, I've seen down through my Christian life young Christians that were struggling and the older Christians that had a relationship with them and the older Christians were tied into them, and those younger Christians were struggling, struggling, and those younger Christians maybe were going to do something or get into something, and that older Christian should have been the leader and said, "You know what, why don't we go do this or why don't you

come over here?" No doubt. But because they didn't understand the scenario, you know what, they walked right into that situation, and it's not a bad situation. There's nothing in the Bible about it, except when somebody's struggling spiritually, they need a hospital, they don't need a dance hall. When somebody's struggling spiritually, they need a hospital, they need a medic. You get out of the battlefield some place and you hear that ominous noise when somebody gets wounded, "Come on, medic!" And a medic goes running out of there under the fire and gets down there, shells blown over his head, and the guy's got his leg blown off or the guy's got his gut blown open, and the medic's there and he knows he's the only one that can save him. He's in a situation that he has now been put in that he is, this guy is going to live or die based on his training of being a medic. There are situations that God will put you in in a spiritual sense that the person that may be your friend, the person that may be your buddy, is going to live or die spiritually based on how you use your training. He doesn't want your life. He don't want your will. He doesn't want your money. He wants your body. Living sacrifice. These are the facts. These are the facts.

You know what gets us into trouble, gets me into trouble, forget you. You know what gets me into trouble? Got me into trouble before I was saved, gets me trouble after I'm saved, is the things that we allow to control us instead of us controlling them through the Holy Spirit of God, whatever it may be. Now, why is that so important? I've always followed a rule: I won't go anywhere and be in any scenario that if the rapture would take place, that I'd be embarrassed for God to find me in. You know what, that's a good rule for you, if I may suggest that to you. That's my rule, but you can borrow it if you want. But I've always tried, and I haven't always done it, but even when I don't do it, it just drills into my head the more that I did. You know why that is? Because Romans 14:7 says:

Romans 14:7

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

You know what that means? It means there's somebody always watching your life, and they don't listen to what you say. Greg McClintock, my buddy that is a judge up in Ohio, who was down here for Bible study a couple of times ago, and most of you know him, he made a great statement one time when he preached for me. He said, "You know what," he was preaching on witnessing, and he said one of the greatest lines I've ever heard, he said, "Every Christian ought to witness, and sometimes you should even use words." You see, when your body is the living sacrifice, you don't have to say anything. You don't have to say anything. It's a fact that somebody's always watching our lives. We've got to come to the point where there are things that maybe are okay to do, but in the bottom line, it's not the wisest thing to do, because there's some young Christian looking at your life, and what you do is going to either be, you're the medic, and either going to live or die spiritually based on how you apply your training.

SEC: Holy and Acceptable to God

So he says a living sacrifice, and then he says "holy." Look at 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. It says:

1 Corinthians 6:19

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

1 Corinthians 6:20

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Let me ask you a Bible question. Look at verse 20: "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Why didn't he say glorify God in your body and your spirit and your soul? Why did he leave the word "soul" out, giving the indication that you don't have to glorify God in your body and your soul? How many know the answer to that? Just raise your hand. Few of you know. You know why he said glorify God in your body and your spirit? Because you don't have to worry about glorifying God in your soul. Today you got saved, you received the Holy Spirit of God. It glorifies God whether you do with your flesh or not. God is going to get the honor and glory out of your life, good or bad. He's either going to get the honor and glory out because you make your body a living sacrifice and you get the glory, or he'll get the glory out of him killing you someplace on a highway or putting you in a hospital someplace with an iron lung or with cancer, and he'll get the glory out of it that way. But he'll get the glory out of it.

Remember last week I told you about Israel? God made some promises to them. God is going to get those promises fulfilled and get them into the land even if they have to go through the tribulation period. Well, God made some promises to you and me, and he's going to get us home to heaven if he's got to kill us. That's rough, I understand, but I'm just telling you, these are the facts. These are the facts. Holy. We have to, our biggest problem, we have to worry about glorifying God, it is our body and our spirit.

You know the two things that indicate what kind of person you're dealing with as a Christian? Two things. These are the facts. These are non-negotiable. I mean, we like to rationalize and justify and we like to skirt around the issues, and that's why the facts are so important because you can't, sitting here this morning, standing here this morning, I can't skirt around these. I've got to look at these as the reality and the facts of life, just like my dad told me about the birds and the bees. I've got to deal with the reality, and they're non-negotiable. They're the facts. You know what kind of a Christian you're dealing with based on two things: what they do with their body and the spirit that comes from them. It's simple. You don't have to worry about glorifying God in your soul. That'll take care of itself. It's the two things that people see. You can't see my soul. What you see in me is my body and the spirit. What does he say in the Book of Ecclesiastes, "whose spirit came from me"? What the world sees is your body and the spirit that comes through it. You want to know what kind of a Christian the person is? Just look at two things: look at what they do with their body and the spirit that comes out of them in the process. It even lines up the God spirit. These are the facts. Your body is God's temple. It needs to be holy.

Let me give you a good example, and this will be one of the greatest studies you ever take in the Old Testament. In the temple, you'll find this back at 1 Kings 7:51. You'll find when they built that temple, there were some things that were called the holy things. They were things that were

the dedicated things, and they were locked in a treasure room. Nobody ever saw them. There were things that the king and the kings in times past had recognized as something that to them was something that God did in their life or whatever, and he took those things and he put them away. He locked them in a room. Most of it is gold, silver, and the things of ornate that were made that have some representation of God, and he put those things in what we would call a treasure house. The Bible talks about many, many times you hear him talking about the holy things and the dedicated things. They were things that were locked in a room that was locked up that nobody got to see it. When the king wanted to go down and glory in all of the things that God had done for him, he goes down and that room is unlocked and he walks in and he looks at all the things, and every one of those things in that room is something that he himself put in that he dedicated, that he said was holy based on something that God did with him.

1 Kings 7:51

So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the LORD. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated; even the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the LORD.

You know when the king got into trouble? You know when Solomon got into trouble, when the Queen of Sheba came up? You know when the kings of Israel got into trouble? Study 2 Chronicles 24:7. You know when he got into trouble? When they opened up those rooms and let the heathen nations come in and see them. Not only did the other nations come in and see them, but when finally Israel was defeated, you know what those other nations did? Now that they knew it was there, they went in and desecrated and took all the holy things and brought them into the world.

2 Chronicles 24:7

For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD did they bestow upon Baalim.

I'm going to tell you something, one of the greatest studies you'll ever take. The only thing that'll keep you in this world today, and I love you, the only thing that'll keep you in this world today are the dedicated and holy things you have locked up in your treasure room. It's what makes the difference. It's the difference between your body being the living sacrifice that God wants it to be or you giving the Christian talking points and coming forward time and time and time and your own heart over and over again and saying, "God, do this, take this, I'll give you this." Hey, forget all that. Just give him your body. Get you a treasure room and put some holy dedicated things in there out of that book and then lock it up and nobody, not your wife, not your husband, not your kids, nobody gets in, especially the world. These holy things in your life and my life are the non-negotiable things, and the world never gets in. It's the only thing that'll keep you when the world tries to pull you.

I want to tell you right now, you all have your own different scenarios, and many of you are struggling this morning, I guarantee you are. In the world we live in, you cannot get, we cannot get a group of a hundred and some people together today and not have people that are struggling.

Some of you are struggling in your marriage or some of you are struggling in your own personal life. Some of you are struggling in your relationship with God. Some of you are struggling in the world, and you wonder why day after day after day after day there's no relief, nothing changes. The answer out of me today is so simple when you look at the facts: you've got no holy things. You're probably sitting there scratching your head, probably been here two or three years now, scratching your head saying, "I wonder what a holy thing is. I don't understand, my friend, I don't understand." But I'm telling you, you're not your own. You're bought with a price. God bought you so you could be that living sacrifice. Christ was my dying sacrifice for me that I could be a living sacrifice for him.

I beseech you this morning, I beseech you this morning not to do that, because I'm tired of Christians getting up and doing it and then failing after about a week because they do it without understanding why they're doing it. I'm tired of Christians getting up and doing it and understanding why they're doing it. I beseech you this morning not to do what I'm talking about. I beseech you this morning to understand what I'm talking about. Let it grasp in your life. These are the facts. These are the facts. These are the non-negotiable items. This isn't like the prophecy that's so much fun or the history that you can learn. This is the everyday rubber meets the road part of your life. God doesn't want your life. He doesn't want your will. He doesn't want your heart. He wants your body to be a living sacrifice.

I'm going to poke myself in the eye. Take your Bibles and look over at 1 Peter chapter 3. What a great verse. This is a living sacrifice that he says to be holy. Paul says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren." Look at 1 Peter 3:15. What a great, great verse. He says this:

1 Peter 3:15

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

You know what our problem is? You know what our real issue is? Mine too. We're real good at telling people what the Bible says. We're really good at telling people how great God is. We're really great at telling people how good God is. We're really good at telling people all the things that God can do for them. But in reality, we should be telling them not what God can do for you, but what I'd rather, by testimony of a changed life, what God has done for me. What good is it telling somebody else what God could do for them? Why don't you tell them what God has done in your life? You know why most Christians can't do that? Because he ain't doing anything. Can't do anything. These are the facts. I don't like this message any more than you do. I wanted to preach some more good stuff.

Look at that verse: "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." You want a little outline to preach? You want a message to preach sometime? The three-point outline here:

10. First thing it says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your heart." You know what sanctify means? It means you get everything else out of your heart. This is exactly what I'm talking

about, the holy things. You put everything else over here and put God here. You sanctify, you give him the premier position in your body. You realize that everything you do is a reflection on what he does. You realize that everything you say, you realize that everything that everybody you're with, everything, every conversation you listen to, he hears. Talk about grieving the Holy Spirit of God.

11. He says, "Sanctify the Lord God in your heart and then the second thing is be ready." You know, to be ready, you've got to get ready. You're not ready just because you get saved. You've got to learn how to be ready, and you do that by getting ready. You do that by getting into the Bible, learning the Bible, learning the three aspects, getting a balanced diet in your life, coming to the point where you realize and you understand the price that was paid. You understand about the concept of God wanting your body, and you realize that you've got to start by putting God first in your life. There are too many things in our lives that compete with God. If I would give you one problem that we all have that is the bane of God's people today, it's simply that we have too much clutter in our life. You see, we live in a society that the more we have, we think we're better off we are. But in reality, the more we have, the more they come out with the new iPod, the big screen TVs and this and the Blu-ray and all this stuff, the more we have, the more we want, and the more we want, the more we get, the more it runs competition to God. What it must have been like back in the 1800s when, my goodness, when you come home from work and plowing the fields all day, all you had to do after you ate was sit around the house and read your Bible. We look at everything backwards, folks, we really do.
12. And the third thing I want you to see is this: note the man asked. He says, "Be ready to give an answer to every man that asks you for a reason, that's the hope that's within you." No mention of any witness, no mention of any passing out tracts, no mention of anybody corralling somebody. It's just the man saw another person's changed life. He saw the hope in you, the way you live your life by your body and your spirit that you glorify God with, and he wanted to know how to get that. I don't know what else to tell you, my friend. I love you to death. These are the facts. These are the facts.

Peter said in 1 Peter 1:16:

1 Peter 1:16

Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

I'm just telling you, it's where we, it's the understanding that our bodies is what he wants.

All right, he said living sacrifice, he said holy, then he said "acceptable." As God's people, there are some things no matter how hard we try to rationalize them, and I'm no different to you, but there are some things in our lives no matter how hard we want to justify it, how hard we work at rationalizing, or how hard we convince ourselves that we're doing the right thing when deep down inside we know that we're not, there are some things no matter how hard we try to make it fit that at the end of the day it's just not going to be acceptable to God.

Now I know and fully understand that none of us is perfect. I've learned a long time ago that there are no perfect people. I think that most churches don't want a perfect pastor. Most churches

just want a real one. I don't want perfect people, but I do want real people. Nobody's perfect. Many of you come in here with backgrounds that were terrible, backgrounds that were problematic, backgrounds that were this and that, and you know what, I've never thought about it one second after you made your commitment to God because it doesn't matter. I've said it over and over, I don't care where you've been, what you've done, it doesn't matter to me. All I care about is all that God cares about is where you're at today or what do you want to do from this point on. It's all that matters.

But I fully understand that none of us are perfect and we all have our issues. We all have our problems. They may be on different levels, but we all have them. We may not want to talk about them. We're not going to confess them to each other, but we all have them. The problem is when we don't want to pretend we don't have them. I've learned over the years, and I don't know what problems you've got in your life. Show me if we meet one-on-one, and you know what, we're working through some things, and praise the Lord for that. But I want to tell you this, you will never change your lifestyle, you will never get rid of whatever problems you have. I will never get rid of whatever issues I'm struggling with in my life. So first I identify what they are, and I identify them for what they are, and then I isolate them out and I mark them, and then I get a plan by which I'm going to solve them, and then I stick with that plan and I just beat the crap out of it till I get it done.

We cannot come to the point, and this is what always happens, it happens in my life, it happens in your life, and it happens in our lives. We come to the point where we make a commitment, we say we're going to do this, and then down the road because we keep the old friends in or the old girlfriend or we keep this or the old ways, and pretty soon without even knowing it, we start feeling that old tug coming back. This church is about, and every church should be, this church is about a new chance for you.

You know what, growing up, we can blame my problems on everybody, can't we? I've had people that blame their, I had kids that were 25, 26 years old, they had problems in life, they blamed them back on their parents. Their parents were blaming on their grandparents. We all like to blame our problems on everybody else. You know what, that works for a while. I talked to one gal one time, and she was, she had all kinds of issues in her life, this was a number of years ago, and she always wanted to, she always wanted to blame the fact that she was not successful. She always wanted to blame the fact she couldn't get anything done because the way her parents were. And I asked her a question, I said, "I understand what you're saying," I said, "When did you get saved?" She told me the day she got saved. I said, "You know what, in reality, you can't blame your parents one more point past that point, because at that point you're a new creature in Christ Jesus, and from that point on you make it or break it on what you do with the book, not what your parents did with you in your life." How we use that as an excuse, don't we? It's easy to blame my problems on you, on the way I am because you got a cold. "Yeah, you know why you got that cold? Because you're against me and God's against you, he gave you that cold." You know, that's the way it is. It's easy to blame my problems on somebody else. Truth of the matter is, you know what, our problems are our own, and until we understand them, identify them, isolate them, and deal with them, nothing's going to change. Nothing's going to change.

I know we all got issues and I know we all got problems, but your life and my life have to be one that on a daily basis we're perfecting it. You know how you perfect your life? You have to identify what your problems are. The problem with most Christians is not identifying, it's getting them to be honest about them. I didn't deal with them from there, the perfecting process. If you're a saved person here, I have two questions for you, and you don't have to answer them, but this is what I would ask you: What's your plan? What's your plan of perfection? Is it stay at home Thursday night? Is it stay at home Sundays? What's your plan? Read your Bible when you get in a jam? What's your plan? Read your Bible when it's convenient? What's your plan in your perfecting? Do you have a plan? What is your plan and how are you going to get that plan accomplished? You'd ask that question to the average Christian and they wouldn't have an answer for you, and then they wonder why they struggle so.

Larry Lester, the guy that owns this, I love Larry. Larry lives in a world unto himself, an old school. We've had a lot of problems here lately. I think everybody on planet Earth has a key to this building. You've got people that rent the back out. You've got the mattress guy's got a warehouse. We've got us. You've got the fly shop. We've got the, you know, the ladies who work here, and then there's a couple caretakers, and then the guy that had the restaurant, and who had the restaurant three restaurants back, they all got keys because they give me and use everything. And then all the mattress guys up there, everybody's got a key. It just drives me nuts. On Thursday night, I'll go around, check the back door. Phil didn't lock it. That door is open. Somebody came in, didn't even lock it when they left. A couple of Sunday mornings ago, I got a call from Bubba. Bubba, it was about what, 6:30, Bubba, 7 o'clock. Bubba said, "Is anybody over at the church?" And I said, "Nothing I know, I don't know." And he says, "Well," he says, "I just came over to pick up a car," and he said, "All the front doors are open." And I said, "Was the mattress guy in there?" He said, "No, there's nobody in there." Well, no, his mother told him. And I said, "Well, I don't know what to tell you about me." He said, "Well, I'm going to drive," you know, he lives over at Leesburg, "I'm going to drive all the way over," you know, "and I'll lock it up." So he came over.

I told Larry the next day, I said, "Larry, I said, we've got to do something about people leaving these doors unlocked." And I said, "You know what, I said, everybody's got a key to this place, and I said everybody just comes and nobody thinks about locking it up when they leave because they think somebody else is here or somebody else is coming back." I said, "You need to get these guys going." And he says, "Yeah," he says, "I know." He says, "But you know what," typical Larry, he said, "You know what," he's the very one to get in, he says, "They're going to break in anyhow." And I said, "You know what, Larry, that's true, so why don't we just leave all the doors open, put big signs up, 'Nobody's here, the doors are unlocked, come in and have all you want.'" And he said, "Well, yeah, you're right." I said, "Yeah, I know I'm right." My point to you is this: we all have problems, every one of us. Why are we leaving the doors unlocked and putting signs up, "Come on in, give me more problems"? Lock the door. Lock the door. Lock the door. Lock the door. Lock the door.

Simply put, there are some things in your life and my life that are totally unacceptable to God based on your body being the temple of God and the lifestyle that we live. I just, you know, most

of the things in your life are none of my business unless you bring it to me. I never say anything about it, never think twice about it, other than the fact that maybe where I'm at with it, where I wouldn't do it. But you know what, we've got to be aware, we have to be aware, we have to be aware that our bodies are a living sacrifice. We just have to.

I know that it's a problem. I was telling my wife about this a couple of weeks ago. When we grew up 30 years ago in churches, there were clear lines. There was certain music you didn't listen to, and now I hear God's people listen to some of the most ungodly stuff. I couldn't believe it. In those days, there were clear lines. There were places you just didn't go. There were situations you just didn't put yourself into. But in 30 years, the lines are all blurred now. Maybe back then the lines were clear, and maybe the lines aren't clear now, but I've got news for you, the same Holy Spirit of God working today was working back there. Let him be the lines for you. Let him draw the boundaries for you. Please don't tell me I wouldn't trust myself to draw my own boundaries as much as I know the Bible and as much as I claim to love God, as much as I could go through that Bible and claim that Bible, as much as I pretend to you to know all the Bible when I don't. Let me tell you something, as much as I do know and as many years I've put in it and as many times I've been through it and many times as I've been pastoring and dealing with people, seeing every problem in the world, you think for five seconds I trust myself to put the guidelines down for me? At the end of the day, we're all the same, aren't we? I can't keep my guidelines any better than you can keep yours, because it isn't about how much time you spend in the Bible and how much you know about it, it's how much you're willing to understand that you have to submit yourself to a structure that says, "Go here, don't go here, do this, don't do this, be part of that, don't be a part of this." That's the problem. Back then the lines were very clear. Today they're very blurred.

SEC: Your Reasonable Service

Then lastly, he says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God." I like the fact that he made that plural. You know the times that God has shown us mercy in our lives? Do you ever stop and just think of the times that God has been merciful to you and me? You want to overwhelm yourself with something that, and maybe you just don't like to think this way because it brings you to conclusions you don't want to deal with, but I'll tell you what, you sit down and just start thinking of the manifold blessings of God in your life that God has done for you to get you where you're at today. I look at some of your lives, and I'll be very honest with you, I look at some of your lives and I thought, and I would have never thought you'd be here today. I looked at some of your lives, at some of the problems you had, some of the struggles you went through, and if somebody would have said, "Put your money down on that person, what do you think their odds are?" I'd say their odds are 10 to 1. But you know what, you're here today. God made a difference in your life, and you know why that is? That's because you grasped the concept and you realized that God wants to do something in your life.

You need to stop at some point and look where you're at in your Christian life right now. Look where you're at and then stop and look at the hand of God in your life that got you here. How God got you where you needed to be to get what you needed to have. Do you really think it's an accident that Jesse found that "How to Study the Bible" book in the thrift store? I look at you two

kids, love you more than anything else in his life, but I remember where we found you guys. Steve and Nicki started coming to church. Steve went out, took his kids to a park. You were there. Do you think it's an accident that he put you in that park? Do you think God said, "It's time for you to take your kid to the park"? Do you think it's any reason that what you were looking for in your life, and you were looking for in your life, you just came back from Iraq? There's no accident, kids. God sees in us what we really want. He saw your need, and you're over there walking around saying, "What am I going to do?" And God's up there saying, "Well, just give it about 15 minutes. If I get that Steve moving, we'll get you, show you what we're going to do. Boy, I've got to kick him in the rear end sometime. Come on, come on, come on, come on." He knew exactly what you needed. He knew exactly what you guys needed. He knew exactly what you needed.

Joe, remember, grew up in church all your life, lost without Christ. How many times you must have said in your heart something to God, and God worked straight at the event. I remember the first time I met you. It was over at the Fort Ohio State game. Everybody thought I came to see you play ball. I did, but I knew he was going to be there, and I just talked to him for a few moments. He blew me off. He didn't want nothing to do with me. But I'm like a little mole, I'm like a little worm. I get in your foot, I'll just dig a hole. God done it. And how about you, huh, John? When our wife and I used to go over there to New Hope, we'd say, "If we ever have a church out of this whole church, we'd want David, John, and Bessie." How about you girls? We talked about it last Thursday night, didn't we? Where you've come from, David. How about you, Porters? How about you? Remember your kids, your girls didn't want nothing to do with it when you first started coming here, did they? Now they still don't because they sit way back there, but they're coming closer. I'm hopefully by Christmas you'll be halfway, and then by next year you'll be up with the rest of us.

Darren, I remember when I won you to Christ just a couple of months ago. I used to see you come at the ball and I used to think you were the most obnoxious person in the world. I didn't, and you probably were. You came late and left early. I mean, you never said anything to anybody. I've got to be honest with you, when the events in your marriage brought it to the point where you finally came over, I want to say, all that day I didn't, I didn't know how I was going to approach this. But you know as well as I do, and this is all my point, you walked in that night and God had it pre-planned, pre-paid, and all ready to go. I've never been in a scenario where a man walked into Christ faster than that. You know what, your family, Mary Ann, everybody here just about is here today because they saw the change in somebody's life. It wasn't what you said. I know I picked on a few. I could go right across this room. I mean, Cheryl's got the most unique soul winning. She's got a gun. You don't get saved, she'll shoot you right on the spot. But it works. It works. It works.

Here's my point: God wants your body. Stop and look at what he's done in your life. Stop and look how he's got you where you're at. Don't focus on the struggles you're having today. We do that. We get overwhelmed sometimes, and many times it's not because we don't do what's right. We get overwhelmed with things and then we lose sight of how God got you here. I've got something for every one of you this morning, and I love you with all my heart, but these are the

facts: God didn't save you, God didn't put the things in your life to get you where you're at to lose you now. The same God that saved you and brought you to this point, I promise you, will take you all the way to the end. He won't stop the train, but some of us will jump off. It's just that simple.

The mercies, the mercies. You know, it's the difference between ministry and service. Most Christians think ministry and we talk about your service for God or I'm into Christian service. Ministry and service are not the same. Ministry is what you do for God, but service is the attitude by which you do the ministry. "Your body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto your God," and then he says, "which is your reasonable service." This really is where the point Paul is trying to make when he opens up this fourth section of the practical Christian life, the facts. Based on what God has done for you and the plan that he has and how he has shown you the mercies and brought you through the things that he's brought you through to get you where you're at now, you've got to see that based on the plan that he has for you and based on what he's done for you, he does not think it's unreasonable to ask you to give your body to him to use as a living sacrifice and deny yourself. Too many of God's people give their life to God, but their bodies they keep for themselves. You see, the issue is simply this: what God calls reasonable, we've got so much, we call it unreasonable. The whole message here, he's talking about, he says, "I beseech you." He's not begging them to do it. I'm not preaching this so you'll do it. He's begging them to understand what he's done for them. I'm preaching this to help you understand.

I count myself as probably the luckiest guy in the world to have spent the years that I spent with my father, the late Malachi Sabaka. He's very ill, probably not going to make it throughout the year. There's not a day that goes by that I don't think of the example that he gave me. There were so many things that he did in his life with his body that I remember to this day. He's the only man in all of my years of Christianity that every year at Christmas he'd take everything that he had in the bank, he'd clean out his bank account, and he'd throw it in the Christmas missionary offering. To him, you know what he'd say? He'd say, "You know what, I'm starting clean this next year with God. I want God to do for me." That's how he lived his life. He wasn't somebody who just said. You see, most of us, we say things. People watch how we live our lives and then they do the math and it doesn't add up. I can't ever think of one time in his life where everything didn't line up. I feel so fortunate that he had a lot of young men in his life, but I had more time with him, and it was by, and I've never, never thought for a moment that it wasn't by God's design that he had what I needed for where I'm at today.

When he would preach, I would drive for him all around Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania. I cut my teeth on the old camp style meetings with him ranting and raving, me playing the trumpet and leading singing. I saw some of the greatest revivals and the greatest power of God coming down in a man's life in preaching and moving crowds I've ever saw in my life. But I've learned so many examples. 35, 40 years ago, we were in Steubenville, Ohio. It was a Sunday night, and we were going to preach a revival there Sunday night, Monday night, and Tuesday night. Steubenville was about 80, 90 miles from camp. I had a full-time job. So that meant that Sunday was a piece of cake. After church, we drove down to Steubenville. Church was out at what, 9:30. Always went out to eat. 11 o'clock for your drive. Two and a half hours back. Get up, go to work

at 6 o'clock in the morning, and then come home that night and then get in a car right after 3, 3:30, 4 o'clock, drive it back two and a half hours back, back doing the same thing for the nights. But it was the greatest time of my life.

On the first night, he was great at research. Steubenville's a little river town. This was in 1972. He was talking about us having our bodies for the Lord Jesus Christ. He was talking about understanding the price that God paid, and he told this story. I've never forgotten it. I can honestly say before God is my witness that it's probably been the single fundamental thing that keeps my focus in understanding the concept about a living sacrifice, even though I'm far from where I should be. But he knew that the people in Steubenville would relate to this, and he told this story. Some of you heard me say it, but I haven't told it for many, many years. He told the story of how the Ohio River runs through Steubenville, and the Ohio River has all kinds of bridges that cross over this, and the boats go up and down and the ferries go up and down, and they carry the coal and all the mining thing out of West Virginia, which is right across the river, all back and forth.

He told the story about a guy that was a drawbridge operator. That drawbridge operator was a guy that his job was that he sat there at the controls, and as the big boats came down the river, they would honk their horns, and he would pull the levers and the drawbridge would come up, and they would pass through, and then he'd put the bridge down, and the trains would come across, the passenger trains would come across. He said all day that he did that, and they'd come down the thing, they'd blow their horns, he'd open it up, they'd go through, and they'd put it back down, the trains would go over, and that's what his days consisted of. He had a little boy about eight or nine years old. This is a true story. This little boy, like most boys, always wanted to go to work with his daddy. He took him to work one day with him, and they were having a great day. It was a beautiful day, and like most little boys, it was coming around where the kid was getting into having a fun time being with daddy, walking around and down by the thing here. His control panel was in a little booth there right at the side of the river. He had a cement stairway that went down with a railing on it.

He got a call that there was a train that wasn't on the schedule that was coming through, and that he was supposed to make sure that that bridge was down. He had just put the bridge up because a tugboat with a big oar had just went through. He got off the phone and came back over, and when he did, he accidentally didn't see his boy and bumped the boy with his hip. The boy fell down the steps, went over the rail, went into the Ohio River. The guy panicked, and he started to walk down to get down the step to get his boy, and his boy's calling for him, "Daddy, daddy!" He goes down to that step, and just as he gets down to that step, he hears the train coming down that track around that mountain in West Virginia, and he looks and he sees that the bridge is up. He starts to go down those steps because his little boy is calling, "Daddy, daddy, daddy!" And he starts to go down those steps, and again he hears that train, and he knows on that train there's probably two or three hundred people, and that train is going to go off that bank, go off that track and into the Ohio River. He thought maybe he could get it done, and he goes up and he put the levers down, but he sees his boy is really struggling, and he takes both hands to hold the lever, and he's holding those bridges, and the bridge is going down, and he stops the lever, and he starts

to go down again, and the train is louder, it's closer now, and he knows he's got a choice. He knows that if he goes down and rescues his son out of that water, that that train is going to go into the Ohio River, and they're going to lose everybody on it. It's going to be a catastrophe. But if he stays there and he puts those levers down, he's going to lose his own son.

You know what he did? He looked at that boy and he looked at that train and he heard that whistle, and it had to be the most terrifying time in his life. He closed his eyes and he shrugged his shoulders and he took both hands and with tears running down his face, he rammed those handles down, and he blocked out the cry of his son, and he held that thing down, and across that bridge went that passenger train, and 189 people on it passed over that bridge and never knew what had happened. Three days later his little boy's body washed up down the river.

Paul says, "I beseech you by the mercies of God that you present your body." He's not begging you to do it. He's begging you to understand. Your body is God's temple. It was bought and paid for. I've never forgotten that story. That story, sometimes I dream about it. Sometimes I've never, there's not a day that goes by that I don't think about that night in that church and hearing him tell that story, because everybody in that church in Steubenville identified when that happened. It happened in 1951. I was one year old at the time. But I've got to be honest with you, I look at my little grandkids, I look at little Maddie, little Kenzie, little Macie, I look at my own two kids, I look at some of your kids, and I'm going to be honest with you, I don't know if I found myself in the same situation where I had to make a choice and I saw that little Macie struggling in the water, a little Maddie, a little Kenzie, or one of my own kids or one of my son-in-laws saw them struggling in the water, I don't think, I'm just telling you, I don't think I'd have the wherewithal to stand there and hold those levers down. Maybe I would, I don't know, but I don't think I would. I think that I know that when I even talk about it, and if you've got kids, you know right now in your heart the feeling of putting yourself in that kind of terrible scenario.

And yet I want to say something to you, my friend, there was a day, you talk about understanding and beseeching of understanding the price that was paid. There was a day, there was a day just as that man stood there and put those levers down and put that bridge across that those people were saved as the loss of his little boy. There was a day when God's Son cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There was a day when God Almighty wanted to strike the whole world that he gave him his Son, and they spit in his face. They plowed furrows in his back with a cat-o'-nine-tails, and they laughed at him, and they pulled his beard out, and they kicked him, and they put a cross on him, and they made fun of him, and they laughed at him, and then they put him on a cross and put nails in his hands and his feet and a spear in his side, and he looked to his Father and he said, "Father, why, why, why hast thou forsaken me? I thirst. Oh God, deliver me from this cross. Why hast thou forsaken me?" And God put his hands to those levers, and God shut out the cries of his own Son, and God put the levers down that the great chasm between heaven and hell was covered by the cross of Christ that you and I could go across that bridge. The price of his Son. That man in Steubenville must have felt the ache and the pain of how he could do that. Well, there's a day, there's a day when God did it for you and for me. There's a day when he turned his back on his Son. He did not yield to him, the one that he said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," the apple of my eye. God loved him, and yet there

needed to be a bridge because without that bridge you and I would be lost without hope, without Christ.

When Paul says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren," I beg you, I beg you, your body a living sacrifice. I beg you not to do it, but to understand the price that was paid, and because of that price, because God turned his back on his Son, he does not think that it's unreasonable to be that living sacrifice for him. He was the bridge for you and me. Now you and I, after we're saved, become the bridge for others. These are the facts. These are the facts. This is the hard reality. This is not prophecy where you get goose pimples. This is not rah-rah about Christ coming back. This is not history of, "Wow, look how that works." This is about tomorrow and today and every day your life facing the world, the flesh, and the devil. This is about you and me understanding the great price that was paid. We don't have what we have for a ten dollar tip. He paid it. After he paid it, he just doesn't think it's unreasonable to ask you and me in our bodies to give up for him.

Every head bowed, every eye closed.