

I. The Facts of the Christian Life

You will remember last week we started Romans chapter 12, and I told you that that particular section, chapter 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16, really the last section in Romans, is probably the greatest section in all the Bible for you and for me as far as the facts of the Christian life.

You remember I told you that when you apply the Bible to your life, we apply it three ways. There is a historical application to the Bible, which means there is history involved in it. There is a prophetic application, and that will be the things in the future, but then there is also a practical application. The practical application will deal with your everyday life. I took that last section, the practical application, and I told you that even that one breaks down into three aspects. When you look at your life from a practical standpoint, the Bible represents three things to you.

We went through these last week. I am going through them again quickly just to put a context to it so we can move on from where we left off last week. We talked about promises, how important they are in your life, the things that get you through. Many of you, many of God's people, are going through some rough times right now with the economy and the job situation and things like that. Sometimes you go through tough times with your children as they grow up, especially when you hit the teenage years. Nothing will get you through better than the promises of the Word of God if you know how to use them.

Then we talked about commandments, and the commandments we basically looked at were the ones that are found in the New Testament that deal with you and I loving God first and then loving other people as we love Him and love ourselves. But we talked about the last one, and that is the facts. The facts of the Christian life are the reality of the Christian life. One of the things that I know I have learned about myself, and I am sure it is true of every human being because we all have the same old nature, is that we do not like to deal with the reality of where we are really at in life.

I firmly believe that everything out there in the world, and you are going to see this before we are done today, at least I hope you will, but everything out there in the world that you and I have to face exists for one reason: it is to get you to get out of the reality of who you really are with Christ. I believe that the facts of the Bible that we have in Romans, and I told you in this last section of Romans, you do not have any promises. You do not have any history. You do not have any prophetic things. But what you do have are the facts of the Christian life; that is really where the rubber meets the road. The facts will separate the real Christians from the ones who live in the illusion that they are walking with God and have a relationship with Him.

You remember last week we started chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. We did not get very far. We only got to verse 1. We are not going to get much farther today into verse 2, but here is what I gave you last week. I said:

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.

Last week we talked about Paul beseeching the folks that he was writing to for them to present their bodies a living sacrifice, not in the sense of doing it, but in the sense of understanding why we are to do it by realizing the sacrifice that Christ made for you and for me.

The Christian life, ladies and gentlemen, and this is the truth, this is the facts: our whole Christian life and its realness or its phoniness, its pretense or its reality, but at the end of the day, our Christian life and what we do for God simply comes down to your ability to understand what He did for you. Gratitude is something that the generation alive today does not understand. Rescue is not in our vocabulary. But when it comes to the Christian life, you rise and fall as a successful Christian or an unsuccessful Christian based on that simple concept of understanding what God has done for you.

We looked at four concepts last week.

1. We looked at the reality of the Christian life through the facts as one, you becoming a living sacrifice.
2. We looked at the concept of holiness.
3. We looked at the concept of acceptability.
4. We looked at the fact that the Bible looks at all of those things in light of what Christ did for you, and He calls you and I, making our bodies a living sacrifice, your reasonable service.

II. Be Not Conformed to This World

Now verse 2 starts out, and it says this:

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 thank and praise you for the Lord Jesus Christ. We love you. We thank you Father for everything that you do for us. We thank you Father for the folks that you put into this church. We thank you Lord for the ones that love you and want to do what is right in your life. We thank you for all the new ones that continually come in, that try to put God in their life and work through the issues. And Lord help us to help them. Help us to come to the point where we really understand that the Christian life is based on facts, not illusion. And Lord we will be careful today to give you the honor and the glory and the praise. Lord as I lay this out today, I need to preach this as I do every message Lord. I need to preach it to me first. And Lord I need to bring this into my own life before I can bring it into somebody else's life. So help us today. Help us all to take from this what we need in our lives, and we will thank you and praise in Jesus name for the sake we ask it. Amen.

Now verse 2 starting out here is a real bombshell. It is the reality of our Christian life. He starts out by saying, "And be not conformed to this world." Today, the average Christian does not mind

doing something for the Lord Jesus Christ. The average Christian does not even mind coming to church as long as he or she does not have to be different from the world. That is the Christianity we live in today. Of course, the devil feels the same way. He does not mind if you worship God on Sunday as long as you come back to his altar Monday through Saturday.

The whole concept of this thing of not being conformed to the world is the kicker that the child of God has to deal with. As far as I am concerned, it is the single number one thing that we struggle with as a child of God. I have looked for 35 plus years; I have watched God's people in every scenario that you can imagine. I have had to help people in every scenario that they get into. I want to tell you, based on all of those years of dealing with people, understanding a little bit about the Bible, and trying to put it all together to help people in their lives, I can guarantee you today the number one problem you face and I face is the problem of trying to keep from being conformed to this world.

God has a plan for your life. We are going to look at that next week. The devil has a plan for your life. The devil's plan is one of conforming you to the world. As I began to study my Bible and I began to realize how important all the aspects were, it was about 35 years ago in my life, maybe 30, that I began to realize that the Bible was a broader scope than I originally thought it was. I think probably everybody goes through that. I began to look at the Bible and I realized that if I was really going to attain my goal, then I cannot speak for where you are at in your life, nor would I. But for me personally, when I got to the point where I saw that Christianity was real, I wanted to know the Bible. I wanted to know the Bible more than anything else in all of this world. There was not anything in this life that could run with it.

I like to do a lot of things. I am not basically a boring guy. If somebody has a party, I am in. I love being with people. I love doing things that are fun. I am not somebody who locked myself away like a monk in a monastery. I still enjoyed life, but the bottom line was there was nothing in life that I wanted more than to know the Bible. I realized very quickly that I was going to have to make some decisions in my life about my study habits. I was not a very good student in school. I basically bribed my way through my graduation in high school with my civics teacher. He needed something, and I had it, and I was not going to pass civics, and that was the thing that was going to not let me pass, and I just made a flat out deal with him. I just said to him, "What will it take for me to get a D in your class so I can go?" I told him I was going into the army and I told him my plans, and I said, "I am not very good at civics." He knew I was not a goofy student. I was just not a good student. He basically said to me, "If you can get this for me, you do not even have to show up for the final exam, and you get your D." I got it. I had to go through two congressmen and a senator, but I got it, and so I passed.

We laugh at that, and I look at that and I think to myself, the reality is when I started to learn the Bible five, ten years down the line, I had to go back and re-educate myself about study habits that I did not pick up in school. I was not good in math. Thankfully, you do not have to do math in the Bible too much. I was good in history. I was good in science. Gym was my favorite class, and I excelled in that. But the bottom line is this: I had to go back and learn English because I realized that the Bible is built on the English language, and the key to understanding this book is understanding sentence structure, paragraph structure, and all of the little things that are in

English composition. I could have learned that in high school, but I did not. So when I wanted to learn the Bible, I had to come to the reality that I did goof off in school, and now I had to pay the price by going back and buying the books again and teaching myself the things of English grammar.

I also realized that to understand this book, I had to understand history, and I began to go back and I began to study history. I can say to you this morning on the authority of the Word of God, and God is my witness, I have spent 35 years investigating my Bible, my Christian life, the line that I come from, God versus the devil down through history because I recognized that that was absolutely key to me putting my Bible together. I began to go through a study of history some 30 plus years ago, and I can say this morning, based on the things that I have done, and I do not claim to know it all. I am not telling you that so you will think that I am some expert on history. I am telling you all that to set you up for the next thing I am going to say to you.

III. Historical Examples of Non-Conformity

When I studied history and I studied the things that were going on, I found very quickly the mark that set apart the early biblical Christian and the early biblical church. I studied where the early Christians were persecuted. They were tortured. They were mutilated. They were murdered by the world, and they went through all of that. When I began to see this, I began to take a form in my mind. When I began to see the persecution, I read Fox's Book of Martyrs. We have it back in the bookstore. I read the great books that talk about the suffering and the persecution by the early church, by the world who did not understand this new thing called Christianity, and they were threatened by it. So they tried to wipe them out. They tried to kill them. They tortured them. They mutilated them. When I came down to it, I found out, ladies and gentlemen, that they did all of that to them for one reason.

Do you know the reason why the world did that to Christianity? It is only one reason. The reason why they did that to God's people in the early church came down, that I found in my mind and my study, for one reason: the early church would not conform. The early church would not conform. Pagan Rome ran the world, and in our studies, the early pagan Roman Empire in the first, second, and third century, they really represent the world system. Their whole system was built on that they lived for pleasure. If you would study the ancient Roman Empire before it turned religious, you would find that there were three main areas that Rome was built on.

The first one was gluttony. They lived for the pleasure of eating. Most people do not know this, but we think of orgies. We think of sexual orgies. They had food orgies. They are the ones that came up with the idea of what we call, and I am not trying to be gross here, but the concept of a vomitorium. Do you know what a vomitorium was? It was a place that when they went to a food orgy, they gorged themselves so much with food that they could not get another piece of food into them, but they lived for the pleasure of eating, so they had a special place where they went and induced themselves to throw up, get rid of the food for the one purpose so they could go back and eat some more. Now that sounds ludicrous to you and me.

The second thing that they had to deal with was the sexual concept, and their sexual orgies and their sexual endeavors went off the scale. We had a disease back in the 1800s and really back all through the early time, and it did not even have a cure for it until around the 1940s. It was syphilis, and syphilis was called a venereal disease. The word venereal comes from the word Venus. Venus is the Roman god of love. Syphilis, as we know it today, do you know why there was not a cure for syphilis for so many hundreds of years? Because syphilis was not a disease that came about between a man and a woman. Syphilis came from the Roman Empire because of their sexual depravity of having sex with animals, in particular sheep, and the venereal disease, much like the AIDS disease today, was not formed between two human beings, but the depravity of a human being having sexual relationship through bestiality with an animal, that the mixing of the two produced a strain in the disease that there was no cure for. It came from Rome.

The third thing that was their pleasure in life was sports. Does anybody see any parallels here today? They had the Roman Colosseum, and that is where they went on Saturday and Sunday afternoon to watch the football games. That is where they went to watch the gladiators. That is where they started out with the gladiators fighting animals, and then a little bit later on when Christianity became a thorn in her flesh, they put the gladiators up against God's people. So it was food, it was sex, and it was sports, and that is a picture of the world system today as we live in it.

Pagan Rome, the early Christian, before they became what we would call Christian Rome, 100 through 300 AD, they accused the true church of being atheist. Now that sounds strange, does it not? Let me explain that concept to you. This is why they persecuted them. The Romans had over 600 gods. They had a god for everything, and whatever they did, they worshipped the god. Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, those are Roman gods. January, February, March, those are based on the Roman gods. They had a god for everything, and when they would catch these Christians, they looked at the Christians because the Christians, they thought, did not have any comparison with them. Because the Christians only had one God, and you think that if you have 600 gods versus somebody who had one God, in worldly thinking, more is better.

So when they looked at Christians, in fact, the word Christian means little Christ. Do you know why? Because they would say, "Where is your God?" You see, the Romans could put their gods in statues, and you want to see this in the Bible, look at Acts chapter 19. There in Acts chapter 19, we have an issue where Paul and those guys are preaching down in Ephesus, and they are making statues to the great goddess Diana, and they are making a lot of money off of it. Paul is coming into town, and he is telling everybody that there are no gods made with hands, and people are getting saved by the bucket loads, and so they are not buying the little shrines. You see them? You see Mary buried in a half bathtub in people's yards? You hear those little songs, "I do not care if it is dark and scary as long as I got my plastic Mary sticking on the dashboard of my car." "I do not care if it rains or freezes as long as I got my statue of Jesus." You know how that thing goes?

The Christians only had one God, and when asked by the Romans, pagan Romans, who were their gods, they talked about what? Now I have to say this, they were doing biblically and

worshipping biblically like the Bible says in John chapter 4, verse 24, because the Bible says that we that worship God, if we are Christians, we worship Him in spirit and in truth.

John 4:24

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

They would say to the Roman Empire, "Well, I cannot show you my God." The Roman Empire would put their gods on their god shelf. They would carry it around. They would put it here, put it there, much like we do. But the real Christians, they said, "Our God lives inside us." So the Romans coined the phrase, "Oh, then, and your God is Christ? Yes. Well, then you are a little Christ." In time, that is where the word Christian came from. The word Christian means in its root form, little Christ. Rome had over 600 gods, and of course, we find that they persecuted them. Why did they persecute them? Because pagan Rome is a picture of how the world will try to make God a part of all its ungodliness, and when the early Christians would not conform to the world system of Rome, they were persecuted.

Now if you know anything about history, you know about 300 AD, somewhere in there, pagan Rome finally becomes religious, and now we have papal Rome, and with that, we have the start of the Roman Catholic Church. That starts under Constantine around 325 AD and then moves all up down through history right up to the day we live in, and now Christians found themselves in the same problem. This will be an example not of the world, but it will be an example of religion without God because now they were faced with the Roman Catholic Church, and where the pagan Roman Empire persecuted them because they would not accept their gods and they looked at them as atheistic because they only had one puny little God, now the Roman Catholic Church persecutes them, and I mean butchers them, because of the fact that they will not conform to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

You can go down through history, and you do not have to get a book written by some book about Catholicism. You can go into the Catholic libraries and get you a Catholic Encyclopedia that will list the massacres that were done on those people down through history because the Roman Catholic Church is proud of themselves because they looked at them as heretics. They would not conform to baptizing their babies. They would not conform to the infallibility of the Pope. They would not conform to taking the sacraments or the mass or taking the Eucharist. They would not conform to baptismal regeneration. All down through history, God's people have been unwilling to conform to this world, religiously or in a worldly sense, giving over to unsaid people. This is why we are called early on Anabaptists. We are called Anabaptists simply because, ladies and gentlemen, as Bible-believing Christians faced with a world and a religious world, we would not conform. The word sanctified means set apart. We are not to conform to this world, not by nature, but by a new nature that we got when we got saved. This is why the Bible says we have been sanctified.

IV. Modern Church Conformity

I said all that to say this. We are going to come through this here. Today, the modern church growth movement is based on one principle: it is based on conformity. Young pastors do not have

a clue and do not understand this. People will go to church today as long as they can keep their ties with the world. This is why pastors will not preach hard today. This is why they will not preach the truth. Because we live in a Christian world that caters to people and not truth and the Bible. If you become a pastor and you understand three basic principles today, you will build a great church. Unfortunately, I will never build a great church because for the life of me, I do not know how to do these three things. If I have any shortcomings as a pastor in the world today, it is my shortcoming of understanding how to do these three things. Maybe it was how I was raised and how I was taught.

If you become a pastor today and you can do these three things, you will build a great church, a big church.

1.) The first thing you do is you have to get your people to want a Bible. Everybody has to have a Bible. You cannot think of church without a Bible. Going to church without your Bible is like going to get gas without taking your car. The first thing you have to do as a pastor is you have to get them to have a Bible, but the next thing you do is do not put any pressure on them to read it.

2.) The second thing you have to do is you have to get them to want to come to church. You have to have them want a church, but you have to figure out the way to have a church but not let that church put them out of any kind of accountability system.

3.) The hardest one for me, I cannot do the first two, but the hardest one for me is when you go to church, you have to have a sermon. You ever notice how long I preach? My method behind it is simply this: we do not have a Sunday night service. You are just too dumb to know it. I just combined them on Sunday mornings.

I was in a church one time preaching, and they had a big plaque out in the auditorium, in the hallway, in the forum. It had a listing of all the men who had died from that church in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. This church had given a lot of its sons. There were like 30 or 40 people on it. I was standing there looking at it, and a little bus kid came up to me. He said, "Mr., what is that?" I said, "Well, son, that is all the people in this church that died in the service." He said, "In the morning service or the evening service?" They want a message. They want a sermon, but they do not want any conviction from it.

I am just telling you, I cannot do these things. But if you could learn how to do these things, you will build a great church. You will build a big church. Because people today, they want a Bible. Christmas time, there will be a thousand million Bibles bought. This is the fact that nobody reads them. They want a church, but they do not want any accountability to that structure. And they want a sermon, but they do not want any conviction. Conformity. Conformity.

We have lost the concept of the Bible warnings in the Bible about losing our landmarks. We go to church today, and we do not even know what it is all about. A few years ago, when you went to a Baptist church, the pastor got up and he tore your hide off. Some people got mad and did not like us. Do you know what they did? They went down to the Methodist church next week. When he went to the Methodist church, that pastor got up and tore their hide off. Two of my favorite evangelists that would just tear the hide off of you down through the early 20s and the 30s were Methodist evangelists: Sam Jones, Bob Jones Senior from Bob Jones University, and Sam Jones.

Two Methodists that would just tear the hide off of you. So you go to the Methodist church, and they would blast you, and you would get clobbered. You would get your nose bent in a joint, so the next week you would go to the Lutheran church, and you would get clobbered there. You did not like it, so then you went to become a Presbyterian. That bite would tear the hide off of you. So you would get clobbered again. In other words, back then, 120 years ago, wherever you went, they were preaching the same thing. They may have had some variances in what they did, but the message was very clear, plain, and to the point. Today, if you do not like what you hear in one church, I guarantee you this: you can travel around in a month's time, and you will find exactly what you want to hear, I guarantee it.

There is a church in California, I saw, read an article on how this guy's method of starting churches, and this shows you where it is at. You think that these are the liberal people. I want to tell you something. There are a lot of Baptist churches in this city and in this state that started out knowing better about the Bible, but because they wanted to reach people, they took things like "Baptist" off their name. Because "Baptist" was not popular. Baptist had a focus. Baptist had a mindset, and people did not want to be associated with that hardline Bible-thumping preaching Baptist church, so they take the word Baptist off because their goal is to reach people.

I have said this before, but I will say it again just in case you forgot. My goal here is not to reach people, though I want to reach people. That is not my goal. My goal here is to tell you the truth about what God said. I should have known early on that I would have been a failure in the ministry. Because when I was still young, and after I preached just two sermons in the Canton Baptist Temple, my nemesis, who I had a man who loved the Bible, Mel Sabaka, and taught me the Bible, then I had another man who was a pastor on the staff who did not like the Bible, did not like Mel, did not like anything that Mel did, and all of their life they were at odds. I kind of worked for both of them for a short period of time, not in a paid position, but one was in the music department, and the other one was in the preaching side, and I worked with both of them.

He pulled me aside one day, and he said this. He said, "Bobby, I heard you preach last Sunday night." I have to tell you, I must be honest with you, this was a message that I preached some like 35, 36 years ago. I guarantee you it was rough. I am going to tell you right now. I guarantee you I said things back then I would not say now. He probably is right. He probably was shocked, and I mean I got a lot of people that liked it, but it was offensive to him, and I had not learned to have been refined yet, whatever that means. He pulled me aside, and he says, "Bobby, I want to help you." I said, "Well, I appreciate it because I need all the help I can get." He says, "Well," he said, "I want you to, I want to try to help you with your preaching." He says, "Someday you are probably going to go into the ministry," and he said, "I want to be able to help you." I said, "Fine." He said, "Well, let me just tell you. You cannot preach the way you preached last night and be successful. If you continue and do not change your method and style of preaching, you are never going to get the results you have to get to be successful in the ministry."

I looked at him, and at that early age, I was not being disrespectful, but I had already decided where I was. I looked back at him, and I said, "You know what, I really appreciate that, but maybe you better understand something. Now I probably preached a bad message last night, and I probably was uncouth at all of those things because I was a young guy. But the bottom line is

this, you need to understand that I am not in the ministry to preach for results, but I am in the ministry to preach the truth. I believe if you preach the truth, God takes care of the results. I do not think my job as pastor is to deal with the results. My job as pastor is to preach the truth and let God take the truth, deal in your heart, and let the Holy Spirit of God produce the results."

Do you know what is wrong today in churches? We have too many pastors that are manipulating the results. That is not my job. I have one job when I step into this pulpit. I work at it all week. I know some of you do not like my sermons. You think I am too hard or you think I am too this. You are lucky. You only have to hear it once. I start out on Monday morning by laying out my outline. I can only work for about, I start about 9:30 and I go to about 11. I cannot stand it anymore. Tuesday I frame up that outline, add some more stuff to it. Wednesday I look at what I got and I reshape it and I refashion it and I put some more stuff in it. My problem is not having material. My problem is getting all the material I have. If I laid it out the way I have it, we would be here until 6. So I have to work it in and cut it down and make it shape it and fit it to where it really works. I come to the point where, on Thursday, I work at it again, and on Friday I put the finishing touches on it. Saturday I look at it, brief it, put it in a go, and ready to rock and roll. I have to deal with it five days. You have to deal with it one. So lighten up.

A church in California sent out a questionnaire to the community, and they wanted to know what the people were looking for in a church because they wanted to build a church that would be what the people wanted. I am just telling you, you cannot build a church like that. But in the world that we live in today, that is where we are at. You have new Bibles, so you have to get new music. We sing out of those red hymnals there, and if you look on the front, it says, "The Hymns of the Faith." They are hymns that were built during the period of time when the Bible reigned on this planet, which we know it as the Philadelphia Church Age, and they are loaded with Bible doctrine. If you do not have a sermon sometime and you get called to preach, just pick one of the songs, you can almost preach it.

But today we have in churches Christian rock groups. I do not know what a Christian rock group is. What is the difference between ungodly rock and Christian rock? I do not understand it because you talk about Jesus and you talk about God, that that makes it okay. I have been in some churches where I heard the person sing before the offertory, and if I had closed my eyes, I could have been just in a bar someplace, and it could have just been the same thing. I do not understand how somebody can, because of the fact that we put the word Christian on it, that it makes it okay.

I know a church in this city that has a jazz band. I was actually at a Bible conference a number of years ago, and on one of the nights, and this was a, and they had pastors from all over the country there. A guy got up in the pulpit, and we get up, and they had a reception down in a fellowship thing, and I went down there, and I stand on the back, and a pastor got up, and he said this, he says, "Kansas City is famous for two things, barbecue and jazz." And he says, "We have elected to give you the second tonight, and we have a Christian jazz band going to play for you." I could not believe it. The next day half the guys, the pastors who were there, were gone. I do not understand it. If you knew where the word jazz came from and what it originally meant, I could

not tell you in mixed company where that filthy word started from and why it was started and who started it.

I know a church in this town has got a poker ministry. They do. There was a time when they set up three, five, 400 tables for a Bible study. Now they set up 120 for a poker ministry. They do that because they want to reach people. That would be really tough if you are dealing with somebody with a gambling problem. I know pastors and churches that social drinking is acceptable. I know churches where you do not have to bring your Bible anymore because they put the screen up there on a screen, and you only have to open up your Bible. I know churches where you do not have to bring your offering anymore. They want your money so desperately and so bad. They do not trust you to remember to put it in. They will now do a direct deposit for you. I like ours a lot better. Just throw your wallet in, and we will give it back to you with what we think you ought to have to get through the week.

Some people do not like to get up on Sunday morning. So now, we will have church on Saturday night so you do not have to get up on Sunday morning. Some people do not want to go to church at all. So we will put it on the TV screen so you can watch it in bed. I am telling you. I have seen churches that had interpretive dancing groups. Interpretive dancing. That sounds spiritual. I drove by churches where on a billboard it says traditional service, contemporary service, alternative service, and a progressive service. Now you know what all that means by the facts of Romans? It means you have conformed to the world. That is what it means. The Church of Jesus Christ has become a flesh-exalting, man-pleasing, man-exalting religious theater, a country fair, a carnival, a three-ring circus that Barnum and Bailey would be proud to run.

We have went from the pulpit to the stool, and I do not mean the one in the bathroom, though it probably fits better. I have known churches that once, do you know why, and I do not know if you know this or not, but do you know why this pulpit is in the middle here? If you go to a Presbyterian church or a Catholic church or a Lutheran church, the pulpit will be off to the side. And it will be up. Do you know why that is? They elevate it because they want to put the priest's class over you. So they elevate the guy. And then it is off over here. In some churches it is on this side, some churches it is on that side. In Baptist churches for time and eternity, the pulpit was in the middle. Do you know why? Because it symbolized that in the Baptist church, the centrality of the Bible in its preaching was center stage. Do you know what we have done now? Taken the pulpit out, and the pastor sits on a stool with a sweater and a button-down collar shirt. He philosophizes about your life. He sits on a little stool with his little paragon socks sticking out, with his little Italian-made shoes that some alligator paid his supreme sacrifice for. He sits there and he looks down at the crowd, and he talks, a lot like Joel Osteen. If you ever went in a locked building and could not get out and Joel Osteen is with you, take him and use him for a battering ram and break the door open with his head, and I guarantee you, you will never mess up his hair.

They talk about the good things. They talk about how good you are. They talk about how all God wants for you is good. How you should be prospering everything. They look at all the good in you and exemplify the good in you. And never talk about one thing that Jeremiah talked about, that the heart of man was desperately wicked and despicable. But that is not what the world wants to hear. I know a church in Overland Park that when they have a praise band, before it

starts, the lights are down. Lighting is everything now. Roy, could we do something with these? Anything. Maybe a red or a black. Or maybe just hook them up for some strobes. Anything. I saw lights like these in Walmart yesterday. These do not inspire anybody. Does anybody want to look at these lights, turn them off, turn them back on, and get saved? The best thing I can do is light versus darkness, but that does not work anymore. This church, the lights are down. The lights kind of come up around the back, and before the band comes up to get you ready for worship, smoke comes out from under the deal. The lights change. It is a theater. It is a theater. If I was not who I am and did not have my mindset, I would not even get up here. I would be so intimidated by all what is out there. Look at me. I have seen some of these pastors that they look like they just stepped out of a parade. When they get up to preach, they look like they just stepped out of a parade. When I get up here to preach, I look like the parade stepped all over me. I would be intimidated.

Concession stands in the lobby. Starbucks coffee. Now you can sit in the restaurant of the cafeteria of the church and eat pizza or McDonald's burgers while Sunday service is on the TV. There are all kinds of ways to conform to this world. You and I can look like the world. You and I can think like the world. You and I can act like the world. You and I can talk like the world. You and I can pursue the things that the world pursues. You and I can follow the dictates of the world or the peer pressure of the world. You and I can react the way the world reacts to situations in life. You and I can love the thing that the world loves, and you and I can go to church just like the world. But the difference between true Bible Christianity and everything that is fake today is that those Christians down through the history of Christianity, under no circumstances, would they conform. And the Bible says, "Be not conformed to this world."

Modern day Christianity in America has no problem adjusting itself to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life, for 1 John chapter 2, verse 16.

1 John 2:16

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Then God's people wonder why they have the struggles with life that they have. I do not have time to get into this this morning, but I will give you something to study out on your own sometime. You will want to know the greatest passage in the Old Testament on a picture of the conforming of what we try to have to do to the world. It is in the book of Daniel, and Daniel chapter 1 in particular. Daniel chapter 1 shows you four steps to conforming. I am not going to get into this this morning because I have some other things I want to talk about, but I want to give this to you.

You are going to find that when Daniel and the boys were taken captive by Babylon, down into Babylon, they were, the Bible tells you, the king's seed. It is a picture of you and me being born again and being a royal priesthood of the king's seed by being born again. He takes them down into Babylon. Babylon is a picture of the world. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, will be a picture of the devil. Now if you have a teenager or you are raising kids, or you are out there in the world yourself, you can see these four things in their lives. I tell parents all the time when I

try to help them with their kids that are having problems growing up. These are the four things you have got to deal with.

5. The first thing you are going to find when Nebuchadnezzar, type of the world system, got his hands on the children of Judah. Judah, these people are in the light of Christ like you are spiritually. They were of the king's seed. They were chosen of the king's seed. The first thing he does is try to get them to change their name. He tried to get them to change their name. God had given them boys names. Those names have to do with God, the Jehovah God. The first thing Nebuchadnezzar does is try to get them to change their names, and the names he gives them are the names of the gods of Babylon. Do you ever wonder why your teenager when they hit eight or nine or ten or eleven or twelve, suddenly they are good kids up to that point, and suddenly when they hit that age they go bonkers? They have all kinds of issues, some more than others. Do you ever put a pencil to it and get the math? Do you know what is going on in their bodies? Do you know what is taking place in the world they are living in? I will tell you in a simple form what is happening. The devil is trying to change who they are, and they are being changed by the crowd that they are hanging with. The devil wants to change their name.
6. The second thing you find in that great chapter is that the Bible says that Nebuchadnezzar had a daily portion for them. Every day you go to work. Not only does the devil want you and me to be somebody who we are not. He wants us to be a child of God, but the devil wants to change our name from Christian to worldly Joe, to worldly Mary. He wants to change our name from what God has for us to what he wants for us, and he does this through the second thing, and that is his daily proportion. The Bible says that Nebuchadnezzar had a daily proportion for these king's seed children that he wanted them to eat, and it is the garbage of Babylon. It is the meat and the garbage that have been sacrificed and offered to all the gods in Babylon, and now God's children he wants them to eat it.
7. The third thing you find coming down through there is the music. They were under decree that when they heard the music, Nebuchadnezzar's jazz band, Nebuchadnezzar's ragtime rock band, they were under decree by Nebuchadnezzar when they heard the sound of music, they were to bow down and worship. Music is always designed for your worship. It feeds your soul and it feeds your spirit. When you take good godly music that contains good godly Bible doctrines and feed it to your soul, it strengthens you. When you take the garbage of this world, Christian world, and put it into your life, you look at some of those guys on those photo shoots and some of those girls, you could not tell them from the unsaved world. Do you know why? Because there is no difference from them, that is why.
8. The next thing he comes down here and he says the fourth thing that he wants to give them is the learning and the tongue of the Chaldean. He wants to get them to talk like the world and to think like the world.

Today that is modern day America. Instead of demanding that the lost sinner, when he gets saved, leave this world through repentance and a separated life, we now drag Jesus Christ down to the world level and adorn him in the clothing of this old filthy world so he will be acceptable and appealing to the people in the world. I am going to tell you something, the day of the big mega church is gone, it is dead. Churches of eight or nine hundred or beyond, the only way you

can get that today in the world that we live in, if you know anything about the Bible, it is to conform and to compromise the truth so you will get people to come so you can build a crowd.

Let me tell you something, I do not know a lot about things in life, but I do know churches, I know pastors, I know the ministry, I know the Bible. I have been in for almost 40 years of my life. I have watched this church concept in Christianity in America, I watched it die, and then I watched it go on a life support system. The only thing that keeps them, you take the stained glasses, you take the smoke, you take the music, you take the praise band, you take all the frills out and have nothing left, you have got nothing. It is on life support, it is being kept alive by the programs. When this church ought to be alive because of the living book that lives inside you. This is what the church cannot do. It was never designed to do. This church was never designed to appeal to your flesh.

When you leave here after Sunday morning, you ought to be two things. You ought to be content. If you have got a relationship with God and you are growing and doing what God wants you to be, when you leave here on Sunday morning no matter what is said, whether it is a hard message or an easy message, I learned in my life the great proverbs that says, "He is a love of the honeycomb, even the bitter things are sweet." You come to the point in your life when you leave here, you leave here content. Do you know why? Because the Bible says that contentment with godliness is great gain. You ought to leave here every Sunday, every Thursday night or whatever it is. You ought to leave here content on the fact that you have got what God has for you. You are a little bit closer, a little bit farther into this thing, a little bit more in touch with God, but you ought to leave here content, but you never ought to leave here satisfied because you always want to go to the next level. Christian life is levels. It is like a staircase that gets you to the top.

V. Spiritual Cancer and Leprosy: A Picture of Conformity

Here is how I look at it. I have to put things in real simple form because I am just a simple guy. Spiritually speaking, do you know what our problem is today? My problem too. We all have cancer. Spiritually speaking, we all have cancer. We just do not know it. The cancer of sin is what I am talking about. If you deal with people in the ministry, you ever wonder why Jesus was called a great physician? You probably think he was called a great physician because he healed people. Well, that is not the whole thing. Do you know that as a Christian, part of your job is to be a spiritual physician? You go have a baby. You go to the hospital, and at that hospital there will be an attending physician that delivers that baby. You know you ought to be a spiritual physician, and your job ought to be able to deliver spiritual babies. You have to be able to win people to Christ.

You go to the doctor, you enter your doctor, and you say to your doctor, "I do not feel good. I have a bad cough. I have a bad sore throat. I am not sure what it is. I may have a flu or it may be a sinus infection." He will ask you some questions. He will check your nose, check your ears. Then he makes a diagnosis. "Well, I do not think," and I know it is gross, "you look at the phlegm that you are putting out. If it is clear, that tells him something. If it is green, that tells him something. If it is chunky, that tells him something." He looks at it, tells him something. Based

on what he finds out from asking you and examining you, do you know what he does? He gives you a prescription. Now, you have a choice.

When I was a young guy, I am like most young guys. I would go to the doctor, and I would be sick. I remember one time I had strep throat for 10 years. It seemed like 10 years. But you know why I did? Because I would go to the doctor, he would say I had strep throat, he would put me on medicine. I would take the medicine until I started to feel better. Then I would quit taking the medicine. Then I would get strep throat again. I did that three times before I figured it out. Take all the medicine. Now, I have come a long way in my life. Today, I have learned this. Sometimes, you get a sinus infection. I get about two a year. You get sick. What I used to do is wait for about four or five days to see if I could kick it and then wind up going to the doctor. Well, that is stupid. Now, when I do not feel good the first day or two, I just go to the doctor. Why be miserable four or five days, then go get the medicine when you can go four or five days ahead and save yourself all the pain and get over it. But that comes with growing up a little bit, I guess.

But I look at it this way. We all have cancer. Spiritually speaking, we have cancer. Cancer is a terrible disease. It is a terrible disease. The number one issue in our world today is healthcare. We want to get healthcare for everybody. I am all for that. But I will tell you what is lacking today with God's people is a special thing: spiritual healthcare. Because we all have cancer. We just do not know it. You are going to find that like a cancer while you sleep. Cancer is a terrible thing. You have prostate cancer, you have lung cancer, you have breast cancer, you have colon cancer. I know when I turned 50, I went and had a physical. My doctor said, "You are at that age now. We need to check your prostate, and we need to have some blood work done." My PSA came back really high. Because normally your PSA is supposed to be like one or two. Mine was nine. He goes, "Whoa." So he sent me to a guy that dealt with that kind of issue. He took it, and it was like eight. He said, "Well, what we have to do now is we have to have a biopsy." So you go through all that. He came to the conclusion that I, which I already knew, he says, "Well, I do not want to tell you." He said, "You are fine. In dealing with this, there are some guys who just run a little hotter than most guys." I said, "That would be me." So I go, but I go back every year for a while. I went every six months. I told him, "I may die of something, but it is not going to be prostate cancer." I go every year now. I have had two biopsies. I know him by his first name. We walked in, and he said, "How is your church going?" I am not a stranger to him because I am telling you what, I may die of something, but I am not dying of prostate cancer.

But you know how you die of prostate cancer? Because it is so slow. You do not know you have it. While you are asleep, it is killing you. You are dying four years before you are dead. You do not do anything about it. You do not feel bad. You feel good. It is when you get the symptoms and you go in and you actually find you have it that it is too late. Most cancer is that way. I am going to tell you this, folks. You and I, spiritually speaking, have cancer. Unless you have a regular health assessment, and here is how it works. When you have cancer, they give you radiation treatments. Now, radiation treatment does not cure you. It is a cure cancer itself. But what it does, it puts the cancer, in many cases, in a dormant state. But you always have the risk. You cannot get your radiation treatments in and say, "Well, I am cured. I am never coming back

to see you again." No, no, no, no, no. You have to be checked on a regular basis to see if that cancer still lies dormant. It is called health assessment.

I am going to tell you something right now. Everybody in here, we are talking about conforming to the world. That is our number one problem. Let me tell you, that problem of conforming to the world is like a cancer. It will be slow in your body. It will eat your flesh one piece at a time. You will not know it until it is too late. Then you are out of fellowship with God, and you are messed up. Do you know what you need? Do you know what I need as a child of God who has spiritual cancer? I, you need radiation treatments. We pass them out here on Sunday morning and Thursday night. You come in and get your treatment. It does not cure your sinfulness of cancer, but it prolongs your life until your new body gets here. Our biggest problem is conforming.

Psalms 1:1-2

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Here is how it works. This is one of the greatest Psalms anywhere in the Bible on conforming or not conforming. Now, let us talk about our walk with God very quickly. We have an illusion about our walk with God. We all have it because we do not deal with the reality. We do not deal with the facts. The reality is this. If you and I have a walk with God, I want to tell you a fact. It is going to be on his terms and not ours. It is not going to be on my terms. It is going to be on his terms. It is just that simple. One of the facts is that when you come to the point where you walk with God, two great examples in the Bible, Enoch and Noah, are the only two men in the Bible that the Bible says they walk with God, two great examples of what it takes. Both of them are pictures, as we saw in the two classes yesterday, both of them are pictures of the day and age that we live in.

Then he says this in verse one. He says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." Let me just say this. Here is another fact. When you stop walking with God, you stop taking God's counsel. Then you start getting your counsel from the world or something else. The downward progression begins. I want you to know another fact. You get, I get, we get our counsel from who we are walking with. Another fact is you cannot walk with God and the world at the same time.

Amos 3:3

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

That is a fact. Another fact is you cannot walk with God and get your counsel from the world, and you cannot walk with the world and get your counsel from God. Then the second part of that verse. He comes down through there and he says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners." The progress starts where you stop walking with God, you start walking with the ungodly, and now you stop walking, and you are standing with them, and you are just one of the crowd.

You want a good word study in the Bible? Take the word "way." One of the greatest simple little studies you will ever take in the Bible. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." John chapter 14. One of the greatest verses back in Genesis chapter 24, I gave it to the yesterday Institute, is Abraham and Eliezer going out to look for a bride as a picture of your life journey. Do you know what he said? He says there, "I being in the way, the Lord led."

Psalms 119:9

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

Psalms 119:14

I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.

Psalms 119:27

Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

Psalms 119:30

I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.

Psalms 119:32

I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

Proverbs 1:19

So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.

Proverbs 16:25

There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Proverbs 4:19

The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

Proverbs 19:3

The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the LORD.

Proverbs 21:2

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.

Life is really simple. We like to make it complicated, but the truth of the matter is, life is simple. You are going to go one way or the other. When you study that word and you lay it down and you break it down, you find out there are only two ways to go. You are either going to walk with Him or you are going to conform yourself to the world, and you are going to walk that way. You cannot separate the two out. They do not go together.

Now, let me tell you a great lesson in truth in life. Conforming to the world is never an overnight process. In all the years I have dealt with people, I have never seen them wake up on Monday, loving the Lord, and then wake up on Tuesday, not loving the Lord. I have never seen it. There is always a process. It is like a cancer, very slow, very steady, one piece of your life at a time, very gradual. You do not get the health assessment. You do not come to get what you need. You do not grow in the Word of God. You do not get the help that you need. Then one day you wake up, and you are dead spiritually. But it did not start on Monday and then happen on Tuesday.

Ephesians 5:11

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

Do you know what the biggest problem that we have? We cannot separate ourselves from the ungodly. We get the idea, "Well, I do not want to separate from my old friends because I want to win them to Christ." Well, that is a very noble cause, but you know what? They are probably going to wind up affecting you a lot more than you are going to affect them. If you really want to affect them, and I know most people cannot get this, if you really want to affect them, the best thing you can do is divide from them because that is the best chance you have got. But we are not going to do that.

You start hanging out with unsaved friends. You start playing ball with them or start doing, going to movies with them or start hanging out with them. Pretty soon, without you even knowing it, your sharpness goes. You begin to erode. It does not take much. It is very slow. We do not see it. We justify it. We say, "Well, they are my friend," or "they are this," or "they are that." We try to justify what we do. But in time, it wears you down because the number one problem we have is conformity.

I used an example of cancer, but something we can all identify with really helps you put it into a perspective. But there is another example in the Bible that shows the slow eroding process of the conformity of this world. You do not have to turn back here. I would rather just have you listen to this. You will be so busy looking these up, and if you care about it, you will get the tape and break it down. But this study is found in the book of Leviticus chapter 13 and 14. It is the study and the incredible parallels of the disease of leprosy.

Do you know, leprosy is a picture of sin in our lives? It is a picture of the process that conforms us to this world. There are four facts that you need to understand about leprosy.

1.) First fact, you need to realize that leprosy is a type of sin. Do you know why it is a type of sin? Because when a man got leprosy, it left a mark on him. And sin leaves a mark on us. When a man got leprosy in the Old Testament, everybody saw it. Everybody knew it. He had a bright red or a white blotch spot on his body, and it got all over his body. All people had to do was take a look at him and say to him, "There is something different from when I saw him. He has got leprosy." Leprosy in the Old Testament is a picture of sin in your life and my life. When a man got it, everybody knew it. It left him a large spot and showed his sin. Just as a man could not hide his leprosy, do you know what he had to do in the Old Testament? When a man had leprosy, he was required by the law to walk around and yell out, "Unclean, unclean, unclean."

There are things that you and I can fake. I am probably the best faker in the world if I have to be. I fake being happy when I am not. I fake being satisfied when I am not. As a pastor, many times you have to fake being happy about things when you are not happy about things. You have to learn to do that because you have to learn rule number one as a pastor: if you say everything you felt and thought, nobody would ever come to hear you preach. So you just shut your mouth. But let me tell you one thing you cannot fake. You cannot fake a real relationship with Jesus Christ. You can fake coming to church and sitting here and say, "Oh, I love him." You can sing louder than anybody else. Everybody will say, "Boy, she loves him." You do not sing very well. She loves him. But one thing you cannot fake is your daily walk with Him. Just like a leper when he got leprosy, it left a mark on him that everybody saw. When you and I get out of fellowship with God, that leper had to walk through the street crying out, "Unclean, unclean." When you and I get out of fellowship with God, when you and I get far away from God, the sin in our life cries out wherever you go, "I am not right with God." No matter how big a Bible you buy, no matter how loud you sing, you cannot fake the reality of a relationship with God. You just cannot.

2.) I will tell you the second fact about leprosy. Leprosy came about from prolonged uncleanness. You did not spread leprosy by a cough. You did not spread leprosy by a kiss, though their lips may come off when you kiss them. You did not spread leprosy with a sneeze. Leprosy, like sin, is spread by filth and not washing. The Bible says by washing of regeneration by the word, type of sin. It spread through uncleanness. If they washed daily and regularly, they would not have gotten this terrible disease. If you and I would wash ourselves daily in the light of the word of God, we would not ever fall out of the fellowship in the walk with God and conform to this world. But we will not do it. We simply will not do it.

3.) I will tell you something else, the third thing about it. There is no known cure for it. It eats away at your body until you are dead. When you have leprosy, you have a slow death sentence. Just as conforming to this world will take over and destroy everything about you in time, one piece at a time, and then spiritually speaking, it will kill you. There is always a debate. I get it about every year at some point in the Bible study on Thursday night. It is a good question. It is a question that needs to be asked on a regular basis. A lot of movies out now about and have been about demonic things, and people always ask the question, "Can a Christian be demon possessed?" That is a great question. That has always been a perplexing question for me because my definition of possession, it confuses me because a saved person, you have the Holy Spirit of God living inside you. Your soul, we know, is sealed from the day of redemption. I can tell you right now that if you are a sinner this morning and you are saved, the devil cannot get your soul and possess your soul. He cannot.

Now, that may be some comfort to you and me. That may satisfy the demands of a question, "Can a Christian be demon possessed?" But for me, that only brings up another larger problem because I understand that the devil cannot get my soul if I am a saved person. But did you ever go through the Bible and find out as a saved person what the devil can get that you have? He can get your eyes. He can get your hands. He can get your thoughts. He can get your imagination. He can get your ears. He can get your feet. He can get your mind. He can get your kids. He can get

your heart. He can get everything about you except your soul. He can certainly get your life, and he will get it one piece at a time as this leprosy slowly, like a cancer, slowly destroys your body.

4.) Fourth fact about leprosy. There was no known cure for it. When you got it, it was a death sentence. Ah, but God made a provision. There was a cure for it. The cure for it was a supernatural cure. The person that had leprosy had to get to the high priest and do what the high priest told him to do, and he could get clean of his leprosy. We all have leprosy. We all have cancer. That leprosy and that cancer will eat away at your body by the things that you and I put into our world that are not conducive to Christianity. The situations, the circumstances, the people. The people we allow in our lives, the circumstances we allow in our lives will either help you or they will destroy you. The longer you leave them in the life, the more certainty you are going to be destroyed because it will act like a cancer. You may have the best motive in the world. You may not want to make the hard decision with all of the pain that comes in that you have got to do it this way. But the longer you wait, the more radical things you have got to do to fix the problem, and then there comes a time that no matter what you do, you are not going to fix it.

The only way they could get free of leprosy was to go to the high priest and deal with what that high priest said to be clean. The only way you can get free of your sin and your leprosy and get clean is to go to your high priest.

Romans 10:9

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

He will make you clean.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

You go to your high priest and you get clean on a daily basis. Now watch this. Here it comes. Everything I said, I said to get you to this point. Our text today is Romans chapter 12, verse 2. It says, "And be not conformed to this world." In these two chapters, in Leviticus chapter 13 and 14, you have a picture of leprosy. I have already showed you that the job of the church is not to conform. I already showed you that the biggest problem I struggle with will be the biggest problem you would struggle with, and that will be to keep from not conforming. Everything in this world is going to try to get you to conform. Everything in this world is going to try to get you to be like the world. Everything you see on TV, everything you see on the billboards, everything you watch in a movie, every person you see as a recording artist or somebody that you, it all pulls you toward the world. I am not somebody who says you have got to be a monk and lock yourself up, but I am saying you have got to understand. We have talked about it over and over again. All things may be lawful, but not all things are expedient. It is like a cancer. It is like a leprosy. It eats away at your flesh very slowly. In time it will destroy you. Unless you get a

supernatural cure from it, there is nothing you are going to be able to do. You are already on your way to dying spiritually.

VI. The Three Stages of Spiritual Leprosy

I want you to see something here, and I want to leave you with this. To me, this is the most sobering thing that I could ever think of. Though this is not obviously a message that we would all love to hear today, it is certainly the facts that we need to hear. I have tried to put it into a stage where I did not come down on you. I ran it through me. But I want to say in these two chapters here, Leviticus 13 and 14, you have three stages of leprosy. Leprosy went into three stages. Those three stages, and you better hear what I am saying today, these three stages are what determine how long it went and whether a man could ever get out of it or a woman could ever get out of it once they got it. You may not have listened to anything else I said today, but you better look at this thing and put it into the concept of the process of your life and my life conforming to this world. I do not care how innocent it starts. I do not care what your motive or your justification is. You have to be careful because everything and everybody in this world will pull you to conform to this world.

Stage 1: Leprosy in the Flesh (Leviticus 13:38-46)

Chapter 13, verse 38 through 46. You do not have to look at it, but go home and mark it and put a little note out there by verse 38, and it says this, the leprosy, stage one, the leprosy in a man's flesh. That will translate into your life and my life in a spiritual sense. Once we know that leprosy is a picture of sin, there is your fellowship being broken with God through no washing. There is your ceased walking with God, and you start taking counsel from the ungodly. You will not be honest about your sin. You will not go to 1 John chapter 1, verse 9 and follow what the Bible says. Now you and I begin the process of rationalization, justification. Many times at this stage when the leprosy gets into our flesh and we do not want to deal with it, we start to blame it on somebody else. We start to look for someplace else to put the blame on because we do not want to deal with it ourselves.

When leprosy begins to get into a man's flesh, out goes church, out goes Bible study, out goes the Bible, out goes your witness, out goes your prayer life, out goes God's counsel. It ceases in your life, and now you start to pick up your counsel from the world or someplace else. I told you earlier, there are all kinds of ways to conform to this world. You can look like the world, you can think like the world, you can act like the world, you can talk like the world, you can pursue the things of the world, you can follow the peer pressure of the world, you can react the way the world does, and you can look the way the world looks, and you can love the things the world loves. But the first stage of leprosy gets into your flesh, and this is where it begins to change in your life. This is where coming to church is not as exciting as it once was. This is where now you can find all kinds of reasons not to be on 3rd gen. Bible study. This is where you can now find reason and justification where once you realized that you needed the radiation treatment, you needed what you got here, it set you up for your week, it gave you what you needed. Now suddenly in a slow process, the things that you once loved and the things that were once vitally important to you are not as important. It gets into your flesh.

Stage 2: Leprosy in the Garments (Leviticus 13:47-59)

Stage 2. Chapter 13, verse 47 through 59. Once the leprosy got into a man's flesh, then stage 2 was it got into the man's garments. Now where when stage 1 set in it affected your flesh, now the leprosy, the sin in our lives, gets into our garments, and now we not only stop walking with God and walking with the world, now we start to look like the world. Now we start to wear the clothes of the world. Now we start to pick up the clothes that have all the worldly slogans and things on it. This is where we come to the place that we get out of, so far out of line with God that we go the way of the world. This is where we get the tattoos on your body, the piercing of your nose, your tongue, your eyebrows, your belly button.

I was at a place the other day, and I could not believe it. I saw this guy was in a pet store. He should have been behind one of the cages. This guy is walking there in his earlobes. See my earlobes? I do not know how he did it. They had stretched down to here and came back up with a big rubber, looked like a shock absorber washer in it. He had taken his ears and stretched, everybody take your earlobe and pull at it. It hurts. Stretching it down until it is like this with a piece of wood in it or rubber in it. It is an ornament. I do not understand that. If he had had freckles, he would have looked like a beagle with big long ears. I just watched some gal come in with a ring in her nose from here to here. Now I am a different generation. When I grew up, the only thing that had rings you pulled was a hand grenade. But I have to tell you, the temptation was more than there to walk over and pull this in a case of emergency. I do not understand it. Why do you have to do that? Who are you trying to look like? Did Jesus do that? Why do we want to get the idea that we, and I will tell you why, it goes back to what we said. Nebuchadnezzar wanted to get them to change who they were.

I met a guy, and I like this kid. He is just the stupidest guy in the world. You do not know who he is, so I am just telling you. I have dealt with him more and more and more, and I had not seen him for years. I bumped into him here a couple of years ago. He has not gotten any smarter. This guy is a saved, I believe he is a saved kid. He is going to wind up with a judgment to Christ, as naked as a Jaybird. He just cannot give up the world. He just cannot. He is not strong enough. He just cannot do it. He just cannot do what he has got to do. He is the dumbest guy in the world. He is a follower. He is not a leader. I saw him one time, and he had this tattoo that he had gotten. Why is this deal that everybody is interested in Japanese tattoo stuff? He had this Japanese tattoo thing all down on his ear and ear. He had not had it, and I had not seen him for two or three years. He had it, and I am looking at it, and he is there. "Yeah, man," he says, "I got this tattoo. It is Japanese." I said, "What does it say?" "Oh, I do not know, but it is neat." I said, "I speak Japanese. You want me to tell you what it says?" "Oh yeah, man, what is it?" It says, "This guy is really stupid for getting this on his arm. If you are a Japanese and you see this bozo, stay a long way from him because he is an idiot." That is what it says. "Oh no, man, it does not say that." Why would you get something tattooed on your body that you do not know what it says? What if the tattoo guy had a bad day? What if you are the butt of a cruel joke? What if you would go to Japan as a missionary and then find out it says, "I hate Japanese"? Or if you think you are a tough Japanese bond, "try me for size." You might get your rear end kicked. Stupidity.

Let me tell you something. Why? What are we trying to identify with? Why do we want to be part of some system? I will tell you why. Because the first stage of leprosy gets into your flesh, and the second stage gets into your garments. Here you are more concerned about your outward appearance than you are your inner appearance. Here you are more concerned about dressing to the world's standards. Here your life thing is, "Look at me. Do not look at the Christ in me, just look at me." Your leprosy will go from stage one where it gets into your flesh and it breaks your fellowship, and then it gets into your garments. You begin to wear the clothes, and you begin to become everything that the world is.

Stage 3: Leprosy in the Home (Leviticus 14:33)

Oh my dear friend, stage three. Stage three in chapter 14, I do not know what to tell you. This Christian world is so absolutely out of its mind, it is so absolute, and I do not like the word stupid, but it is absolutely the dumbest, stupidest people on planet earth. Leprosy gets into your flesh, and then leprosy, when you do not deal with it and you do not do what is right and you keep getting your counsel from the world and the people in the world and you do not get back in the Bible and do what is right. It gets into your garments, and then my friend in chapter 14, verse 33, stage three is the leprosy gets into your home. Now you bring it home to your family, and it gets into your house. It affects your wife, it affects your kids. Your whole family gets infected.

There is a great study in Joshua that goes along with this, and I do not have time to get into it this morning, but it is found in Joshua chapter 6 and Joshua chapter 7, and it is the sin of Achan. The sin of Achan was that they fought the battle, and they were out fighting the battle, and God told them there are certain things that you cannot take as spoil. Do you know what Achan did? He found a Babylonian garment, type of the world, and a wedge of gold, picture of the world, and he took those things, and he knew he was not supposed to have them, but he kept them. Do you know what he did? He went home, and he went back, and he got into his tent, and he took his trench shovel, and he dug a nice little hole, and he buried the gold, and he put it down in the garment, and he covered it back up. He knew that he had violated the very principles of Almighty God, but because of what he wanted to do, he took that spoils that he was not to take, and he hid it, and he covered it over, and he camouflaged it, and he made it look like the rest of the dirt. Then what he did then, he got up knowing that he was wrong, knowing what he had done, and he walked out of that tent, and he looked at his fellow soldiers, and he says, "Boy, boys, God was good today, was not it? Great battle. Boy, God is really good." He pretended that he was right with God when he was not. And everybody believed him, except God.

There are five things that happened to Achan, and I do not have time to go through all five of them this morning, but the fifth one was because of what he did, his family got killed on the ground. Along with him, leprosy will start in your flesh. It will get in your garments, and it will get in your home. It affects your wife, it affects your kids. Your whole family gets infected.

Oswald J. Smith, dead many years, preached great sermons. One of the greatest sermons I have ever heard him preach. I heard him preach it five times before he died. He might as well have died because he could not preach it today. He might preach it here, but he could not preach it in the churches he used to preach because, brother, I will tell you what, I watched him preach, and

the Holy Spirit of God came down through that message, and I watched him clean out the pews. I watched there was so much snot and slime on the pulpit and an altar when the sermon was over, you would have to skate across. I have seen 200, 300 people coming down and getting their life right with God on one message, and the title of it was "Payday Someday."

Payday Someday. That leprosy gets into your flesh. You do not deal with it. It gets into your garments, and you play the man, and you be like the world, and then it gets into your house, and your kids go to hell. Your family dies. They all get messed up in the world, and the progression of sin to the third and fourth generation begins the process in your life, and you just scratch your head. Payday Someday. Somebody says crime does not pay. You are nuts. I had a preacher say one time, "Well, sin does not pay." You are crazy. The wages of sin is death. It pays, and there is coming a payday someday. Instead of doing what we need to do, we make the heart and make the hard choices. When it gets into your house, your family gets affected. I am not going to say that families do not have issues just if you do what is right. Obviously we do. But when you do not have the conviction of the understanding your walk with God, then you do not have what you need to fix it. When your attitude is in the world, when your life is slipping back to the world, when you are taking counsel from all the people out there who do not know what they are talking about.

I do not know if you have heard it or not, but the big stick now about our church is the fact that we have no grace. A couple of bozo wannabes out there that could never build a church if their life depended on it. Calling people, "Well, you know, Bob really knows the Bible, but Bob does not have any grace." The church knows a lot of people in there. Name some of you. They know the Bible. They do not have any grace. Let me tell you how you know I have grace still. Maybe not a lot, but I have some. You know how you know I have grace? Because the next time you call me on the phone and your life is in a mess, and you have not done what is right, but I still want to help you, and your life is a disaster. I will still pick up the pieces. You know how we still have grace? Because I will never say to you on the phone as much as I may think it, as much as I may want to. Grace keeps me from saying it. I will help you. I will do whatever. I will be whatever. I will go through whatever you have got to go through with you. But what I will never say to you is what I should say to you if I did not have any grace. "Bob, my life is in a mess. My kids are doing this. My husband is this, or my wife is doing this. I know, Lord, Bob, I have not done what is right, and I have been a long way out, but I really need help. I want to do what is right." "Oh, boo hoo hoo hoo hoo hoo. I want to do now. Oh, I messed it up. I made such a mistake. I did not go to Bible study. I quit doing this. Bob, what will you do?" I will never say to you, "Hey, listen to this. Payday someday. Payday someday." That is a fact. You cannot live your life without God and then skip payday. But when payday comes, no matter what, my job is to help you. Pick up the pieces. My job is to get you to the only one that can solve your leprosy problem. It is not Dr. Phil. It is not Oprah. It is to get you not to conform to this world, but get you to where you need to be with God. Everything out there wants to pull you back from it.

I have had people in my life that have come back and got right with God a hundred times. Do you know what? The hundred and first time you never have the place to be able to say what you would like to say. "Payday someday." Click. But here is a payday coming. It comes in all of our

lives. Nobody skips the great paymaster. Nobody does. Nobody does. When it gets into your house, it gets into your family. When it gets into your family, you have got some serious problems and some serious issues. You think that you could just, it was a time when you used to drink in bars. You do not drink in bars anymore. You just keep it in the refrigerator. There was a time you used to go to parties and smoke dope. You do not do it anymore. You just walk the dog down the street and do it. Or you sneak down in a basement and do it.

Did you ever check into an apartment or a hotel and you tell them that you want a non-smoker's room? When you get into the room, do you have to see a sign in there that says, "This is not a non-smoker's room"? No. The minute you walk in, you smell it everywhere. We have got some people across the street that are not the nicest people in the world. There are always gangs of kids out there. They are scared to death of my big dog Buddy. Because Buddy does not like them. I will take him out for a walk, and he is pulling on the leash. He is going after them. All they have to do, sometimes they are all teenagers. They are all sitting there, and they all smoke dope. You can smell it coming over to my house. I went out the other day, and Barb was staggering around. I said, "Honey, you need to get in the house. You have been out here too long." She says, "Oh, but I like it." I said, "Get in the house." She says, "Watch, Robert. I can fly." I said, "Get in the house."

I am walking Buddy down the street. Buddy is just going at them. He is a big dog, 110 pounds. He is going at them. The guy says, "What is that dog mean about?" I said, "Well, that is a police dog." He said, "What kind of dog?" I said, "A police dog. He is trained." One guy said, "Why is he barking at us for?" I said, "Because he is trained to sniff out drugs. You guys got any drugs over there?" "Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no." They will be sitting around that driveway, and I will take Buddy out, and they will all get up, run right in the house. The little white one, she is not an aggressor, little Daisy, but she is the smartest. Do you know what I got her to do? I got her to carry a baseball bat in her mouth down the street. Is this not true? I will walk out in the thing. She does not bark. She wants to be Buddy's friend. So we have to put on a facade that I have the two meanest dogs. I do not want these guys bringing in my house. So I have her. She carries a ball bat. I walk out there, and she will sit down. I will put the ball bat in her mouth, and she will walk down that street. A big old ball bat. I walked down here today. The guy says, "That dog is carrying a ball bat." I said, "Yeah, police dog. You know what? She is always on duty. That is her billy club."

I have forgotten how that fit into what I was saying this morning. Oh, I know. You ever go into a room and smell the smoke? Smell everywhere. It gets into your clothes. Remember when you were a kid coming home, and your mom said, "You have been smoking?" You said, "No." "No, you smell like a pack of Marlboro, but you did not smoke." It gets into your clothes. Did you ever see, when I was in school, and the coach was saying, "You smoking?" He would say, "No, I am not smoking." He said, "Let me smell your fingers." "You have been smoking. You have been smoking." Do you know why? Because it gets into your hands. It gets into your flesh. It gets into your clothes. It gets into your house.

VII. The Cure for Conformity and Final Exhortation

My job? To get you to the high priest to get it clean. I do not care how many times. I heard that old boy preach that message, "Payday Someday." I think John may have it on tape at home someplace. We have all them old preachers, "Payday Someday." He did not cut them any slack. He did not need to cut them any slack. He preached that message that your life is sin and doing what you want to do. You live your life the way you want. You run with the world, and you do what you want to do. You think you got away with it, and then he came down to that point. Payday, someday. When that leprosy goes through those stages and it gets into your flesh, and you do not deal with it, and that leprosy, like a cancer, gets into your clothes, and you just go along with it, then that leprosy finally gets into your house. It affects your children. The bad choices and the bad decisions and the things that you have done in your life that you did not deal with and should have done with and did not stay growing and did not make the hard choices and you should have done it and you did not do. Now, my friend, they come home to roost, and it is some payday, someday. It is just that simple. But know for sure we will always be here to help you no matter where that is because that is what grace is all about.

All down through history, the mark of Bible Christianity and the Bible believing child of God was simply one thing. He would not conform. They would not be part of the religious stuff that was going on, and they would not be part of the worldly stuff that is going on. We as God's people need to understand that no matter what happens today, we wonder why God's people have the problems they have got in their life. I will tell you what, my friend, the Bible says that God and Moses had a relationship, that he spoke to God face to face like a man speaking to his brother. We just say something to God's people. I know it is a world of technology today, but I want to tell you something. If you spend as much time in that Bible seeking out God's face as you do on MySpace, you would have a revival in your life. Instead of sending all your emails, try a little email. You will have a revival in your life. Cannot get up like I did 20 years ago when I did that. When I was growing up, texting, texting, texting was getting into the book and taking a text of that Bible and laying it out. Things change, times change, but the Bible never changes. The facts never change.

Next week from the rest of this verse, I will show you why in reality the facts, the process that 100% guarantees that you will never fall back into the world. I am going to show you next week the process that God has put in here that if you want the victorious Christian life, no matter what your circumstances, no matter where you have been, no matter what situation you are in, no matter how bad it may look, I have never found any place in anybody's life, no matter what the situation was, that there was not something that could be done that would turn the event around. It may be a hard choice. It may be a choice that is that maybe you cannot do, but there is never nothing that you can do. Every head bowed, every eye closed.