

Romans 13:8-16

Sunday 2/28/2010

SEC: Introduction to Romans 13 and the Concept of Perspective

Let's turn to Romans chapter 13. For those of you that may be visiting today, I always like to bring everybody up to speed, and even our own people, because we can forget what we talked about last week. My job is not only to teach you the book of Romans, but to show you a continuity of how the book goes together. We are looking in Romans chapter 13, and the theme of Romans chapter 13 is the importance of our government to God's overall program.

We have talked about how the book of Romans is a book of perspective. Almost every chapter teaches you and me as a New Testament Christian what God wants us to see and understand about something in our Christian life. To me, this is a book that redefines a lot of things, and it has changed a lot of things in my life over the years. Things that I have had to redefine, things that I once looked at one way, that now I had to look at them another way.

Last week we looked at the perspective of ministry, where we talked about paying tribute or taxes as we know it today. That was an important chapter because once I laid it out, we saw the models and the biblical principles that were to follow. I also showed you how the issues come up today with different Christian groups who think it is unconstitutional to pay your taxes, or people who try to get around paying their taxes. I showed you very importantly from the Word of God how that is part of God's overall structure when it comes to the government. I showed you the model of that with Christ Himself. That was a very important thing for us to understand.

SEC: The Profound Concept of Consequences

Today we come to what I think is one of the most needed and profound concepts in all the Bible. I want to take the time to thoroughly explain it today because I think that if there is one area that really spells either success or disaster for the Christian's life, or anybody's life, it is the concept that we are going to talk about today.

In dealing with people, and I deal with people all the time, we have had a great influx of people who have come into our church, many of whom you have brought in because they saw the change in your life. That is such a profound concept for some of you to grasp. Many of you, and I have talked to you on a weekly basis or maybe every other week, struggle so much with the fact that you want to be an influence in somebody's life in a positive way for the Lord. You think that because you are maybe not where you need to be yet, or you are still going through discipleship in many cases, or you are coming through a process in your life where you are not quite where you think you want to be yet. Sometimes you get down about that or you feel like you are not where God wants you to be as fast as you should be. But some of you are beginning to see how God will use you wherever you are.

I never want us to get into the mindset, and I think this is a terrible mindset, that you have to be in some spiritual position before God will use you. God uses you on the basis of your attitude of heart of wanting to be used, not on the spiritual level of where you are. We have seen it in the last month or so where maybe you do not have the ability to sit down with somebody and open up

the Bible to them and actually fix their problem or help them with their issue. But where you are, what you can do, is get them to me and let me do that. Honestly, I could not do it if you did not get them here.

The last couple of weeks I have seen some incredible things, even this morning before we even had church. I had a counseling session with a sweet couple that really want to make a difference in their life and really want to make things start to be able to count. When I start dealing with people, their issue becomes my issue. I think the Bible is very clear in the book of 2 Corinthians on the handbook on ministry, how that when you start to work with people, their problems have to become your problems to a certain degree.

Thursday night we had a great talk about laying out the format from where we want to go. One of the reasons why I enjoy Thursday night so much is because there is no real structure to it, and the Spirit of God has a chance to bring out what He wants to bring out. I was overwhelmed that by today, I have had probably 15 or 20 phone calls of people saying, "What you laid out Thursday night and what you need in this ministry is exactly what I want to do and what I want to be." That is overwhelming to me because that is exactly what we have to do to continue to grow.

In dealing with people's problems and issues, you have to basically make their problems your problems. You cannot deal with people's problems on a nine-to-five basis. This is what the great book of 2 Corinthians teaches us. Paul goes through there and he talks about the tribulation, the strife, the problems, the heartaches, all of the things that he went through with them. That is what forged them into a great, strong ministry and brought about great results for the Lord Jesus Christ.

You are going to find that everybody makes mistakes. When dealing with people, you cannot really blame people for the mistakes they make. I tell people all the time, I do not really care where you have come from, or what you have done in the past, or what you did not do. I am not really caring about what mistakes you have made in the past. Now we might have to deal with some of those things to get you out of them. But at the end of the day, I could care less where you have come from, what you have done, what you have been into, because everybody makes mistakes.

The problem comes in when we keep on making mistakes. Remember, mistakes come from where? Mistakes come from bad choices. When we continue to make mistakes or continue to make bad choices that bring us mistakes, and many times we have seen ones over and over and over again, that is where the issue of your life can really get complicated.

I am not interested in just teaching you about people's problems and how to fix them. I want you to learn behind the scenes why people get into the problems they get into. You cannot fix something until you know how it got broken. That is why it is incredible when we talk about the ministry principles. You are going to get a bucket load of them today as we come down through here.

Understanding people's problems: For every action, there is a reaction. You shoot a gun, there is a recoil. The old adage is, what goes up must come down. You throw something up, it only goes so far, and then it comes back down. For every force, every action, there is a reaction. We talk about in dealing with people, attitude versus action. Attitude is the thing that starts it, and the action then is the recoil to the attitude.

Every decision or choice that we make in life, there comes a consequence with that. Sometimes it is a good consequence, like getting saved, like stopping drinking, like stopping smoking. There are good consequences, and we could talk about them all day. When you make good choices, sometimes the consequences are good choices. But just as with good decisions and their consequences, with bad choices or decisions, there also become consequences.

In the Bible, we know this from Galatians chapter 6 verse 7. This will be what the Bible calls the law of sowing and reaping. There are seven laws that your Bible is built on, and those seven laws are the laws by which everything in this universe runs. One of those laws is the law that we find in our own lives, and that is simply the law of sowing and reaping. The same line is for every decision, for every bad choice, there comes a consequence to that.

Galatians 6:7

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

When you start to deal with people and their issues, my job is always, and the job of a good counselor will always be, to get to the root problem as fast as you can. I will sit down with people and they will tell me what their issues are. My job, one of the things that I will do in the course of time, is to show them, in most cases this is true, the thing that people think are really the problems, in most cases are not really the problem, but they are the symptom of a problem that they do not see and understand.

In dealing with people in its simplest form, what you do with a problem is basically peel back the layers. People's lives are like onions, like a head of lettuce. Inside of that head of lettuce or that onion, there is a core. I guess that is a pretty good analogy because I guess you could say the onion would be the very traumatic problems and the lettuce would be the refreshing problems because when you peel back onions, you always cry. That would be the bad side. When you peel a head of lettuce, you get a nice salad out of it or whatever. That is probably not a good ministry principle, by the way, but my point is this: when you start to peel back those layers, and this is very important, when you start to peel back those layers, I can almost guarantee you that every layer which represents a problem will be there because of a bad choice or a bad decision. That is simply the way it works.

Now some decisions, some choices we make seemingly carry very little penalty or consequences. That can be very deceptive because what happens in time is as the little things build up, you get a compounding effect in our lives and everything that we do.

Ecclesiastes 4:12

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

What does he mean by that? That means if you take a little string, and you have heard me use this before, if you take a little string and you wrap it around your fingers one time, just a little piece of thread, a piece of sewing thread, you can pop that just like there is nothing at all. You take that same piece of thread and put it around two or three times and you can pop it. You take that same little insignificant piece of thread that you can break in half, almost break it by blowing on it, and wrap it around your fingers a hundred times. If your life depended on breaking that little thread wrapped around your life a hundred times, you are going to die. You know why? Because you have compounded, you have taken something that seemingly was very, very, very minute and fragile that you could control, pop it, and then that same thing that you could pop wraps you up so much that now it is controlling you and you are no longer controlling it.

This is really the issue in dealing with marital problems, really the issue in dealing with any problems. Think of it this way. Courtney, down here in front, who is seriously taking notes, Courtney is a swimmer. I marvel, you have the body of a swimmer. You look like you ought to be an Olympic swimmer. You are sleek. You just cut through the water. You told me this week when I asked you how much you swim, do you swim a mile a week or a couple times a week? A mile a week? A couple times a week. Okay, I do too by the way, but I just want to make sure we are on the same page. I do not find that funny at all, folks. I do not see any reason to laugh about that.

Courtney is a swimmer. I have watched good swimmers swim and they are amazing. They glide through the water like they have a rudder. Their bodies are shaped. They have learned how to deal with it. They have learned how to deal with the resistance of the water and when they dive in they just float along and come back up and they are great swimmers. To swim a mile, that is a lot. I do not know if you know how far swimming a mile is, but that is a lot. Do it two or three times a week, that is still a lot.

If you are a swimmer and a really good swimmer, I remember years ago I followed this story about, and I cannot think of her name right now, but she attempted to swim the English Channel, the channel between England and France. I think it is like 40 miles at the closest point. I cannot remember if she did it, she tried it several times. People have tried it down through history.

I have often thought of myself in my own life and in people's lives that when you are a really good swimmer and say you are going to swim the English Channel and you start out good and you are moving along and suddenly somebody rows up beside you and puts 10 pounds on your back. You struggle but you keep going. You know why? Because you are a very good, strong swimmer. But then at the beginning of the next mile somebody comes up and puts another 10 pounds on your back. And every mile thereafter somebody puts 10 pounds on your back. Let me ask you a question. You could be the greatest swimmer in the world but how long will it be before you struggle so much with the weight that is on your back that you wear yourself out and you drown?

Bad decisions and bad choices are like the 10 pounds that get added to our walk. We start out wanting to do right with God. We start out with the best intentions. And then we make bad choices. We make bad decisions. With every bad decision we make it adds weight to our walk with God. In fact, I know the Bible talks about a walk with God but I think it is even more than that. When we look at the decisions that we make, the bad choices, each one of them brings us to a place in our life where we have to carry extra weight.

Hebrews 12:1

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

I do not know what you know about English grammar or English structure of sentences or whatever, but it is interesting there when you look at that it says, "let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us." It did not say "the sin that say doth so easily." It says "the sin which." That word "which" refers back to the weight. In other words, in our race for God, we are in a race. If you are saved here this morning, you are in a race and based on that passage, you and I as God's children are running a race.

1 Corinthians 9:24

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

That prize, ladies and gentlemen, will be at the judgment seat of Christ. Roy was talking about it this morning. The Bible says that we are trying to win that prize. But there are two things that keep us from getting that prize. The first thing is in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 24 where he says that we are to be temperate in all things. What does temperate mean? Balanced. Temperate means that we keep our lives under control and in balance where we keep the bad choices and the bad decisions to a minimum. Why? Because we are in a race and every bad choice we make, every bad decision we make adds weight on us. Just like Courtney is a great swimmer, if every time she did that lap of that pool and she went back, I put five pounds on her back, and she went back and came back and I put another five pounds on, it would only be a matter of five or six laps before she would wear herself out and she would drown.

This is why people have problems and why they get their lives swallowed up and they never finish the race that God calls them to finish. It is because of bad choices and bad decisions that keep adding weight to the race that we are to run. We are in a race. We are in a race against the devil. The devil wants to destroy what God is doing in your life and God wants to do something. You are in a race with that. You are in a race against heaven. You are in a race against hell. And certainly, my friend, you are in a race against time because right now we know from Psalms 1 and many other places in the Bible that if you and I are saved this morning, the Bible says that we are like a tree planted by the river of waters, that would be God in the Word of God, which brings forth His fruit in His season. When you are saved this morning in this room under the sound of my voice with the Word of God and you are absolutely sure you are saved, the bottom

line is simply this, my friend, you now are in a race and that race is against time because you are in some point of your fruit bearing season for God.

There are Christians who go their whole life and never realize what I am talking to you about today and never produce any fruit in their life. Then there are Christians who understand exactly what I am saying and do not care and go through their whole life and never worry about producing fruit.

The second thing that keeps us from doing that is found in 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 5.

2 Timothy 2:5

And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

In other words, it has to be done by the principles of the Word of God. Every bad choice we make, and remember life is about choices. This is why God gave you alternatives in life. This is why God allowed the devil to come into the world in the first place. We have talked about it many, many times because God gave you a free will and God wants you to choose to do for Him what is the right thing to do. But when we choose to do that, the thing that keeps us from running the race, finishing the race, is the fact of the bad choices and the bad decisions that we make, for each one of them add weight to our walk, our race, and in time it compounds to the place where just as our swimmer example, we wear out and we drown.

SEC: "200-Pound" Weights: Major Bad Choices

All of that is absolutely true, but along with that there are some bad choices that will kill you so fast you will never have a chance to get into this race. These choices are not 10-pound weights. These choices are 200-pound weights. These choices sink you before you get started.

Let me say this to you, I am not here to paint a picture of gloom today in any way, shape, or form. I am here today trying to help you understand this great principle that we have not gotten to yet, but I deal with it all the time. It is probably the number one issue that I deal with in relationships and problems that people have, and if you ever get to the point where you are good at working with people, you are going to find yourself knee deep in this before you turn around.

Some of the things, just to name a few, some of the things that are the 200-pound weights that will kill you very clearly:

1. Marrying the wrong person. Marrying the wrong person, getting out of God's timing, getting out of God's will, marrying somebody because you cannot wait to be married, finding a boyfriend just because you cannot wait to have one. Those are the bad choices that you make, and those bad choices do not weigh 10 pounds. Those bad choices weigh 200 pounds plus because there is nothing that will stop you from running this race dead in your tracks as getting the wrong helpmeet in what God has called you to do. The Bible has talked about that marrying unsaved people is totally out of the picture. But how many times has that man or that woman suddenly transformed to be a saved person just because you wanted to marry them? And then later on we find out that they were not. We find that many times, and I have

told you before, you do not marry a man, you do not marry a woman, you marry the Christ that is in that person, and it takes a while. That is why the Bible says to prove all things.

2. Getting in the wrong church. I will tell you something else that will kill you dead on the door now, getting in the wrong church. Most people do not understand the concept of why God gave the church, and we will not go through it again this morning. But let me tell you something, if there are any two things that will strip you naked at the judgment seat of Christ, it will be the wrong person you marry or the wrong church and the wrong pastor you link up with.
3. Some kind of sinful relationship. Everybody would understand this. You get a person that is promiscuous and they do what they want to do and whoever they want to do it with, and wind up down the line, they get AIDS or some venereal disease. You see, there are some consequences by the choices that we make.

If you decide to go 90 in a 55-mile-an-hour speed limit, you are going to get busted. But it is what? \$120? No big deal. Now, after you get five of them, the consequences come up. You lose your license. You know something about that, do you, honey? Yeah, okay. All right, we will not go any farther than that. The farther you go, and then you do it again, and then this time you got alcohol in your system. And then you get a DWI. That is another set of consequences. And then maybe down the line someplace, you accidentally run through a red light and miss a stop sign because you are not paying attention and you kill somebody.

It does not seem like much, but the compounding area, if you are not held accountable at some place along the line, once you get away with speeding once, you think you are going to do it twice. How do you know that? Because that is the way I do. And you are no different than me. We may be different sizes, different colors, and have longer hair, shorter hair, but there is one thing we all have in common, ladies and gentlemen. We all have an old-sin nature that will try to get around the system every time it can. That is just where it is. And in that, I am no different than you.

Now, I am not saying God cannot fix these things. He can. He can. You married a wrong person. You get yourself in a bad situation, there is always something you can do. People come in and they will talk to me and they will always say to me after the end, "Well, Pastor Bob, do you think there is anything we can do?" I always say to them, "That is never the question. There is always something you can do." I do not care what situation you find yourself in today, big, little, or small, or in the middle someplace. I do not care. Whatever situation you find yourself in, there is always something you can do. The question is, will you do what you have to do? That is the question. It did not matter, "Is there anything I can do?" There is always something you can do. Will you do what you need to do?

The prolonged times in our lives where we do not discipline ourselves and put those things into our lives, the longer it takes. Here is a great ministry principle for you, which probably most of you already have. I tell people this, I said, "There is always something you can do, but you need to understand this. It always takes longer to get out of the problem you are in than it took to get into it." O'Mell Subaca used to say, my father always said, "Sin never leaves a man any better than he finds him." And boy, that is a true statement. That is a true statement.

So there are some decisions we make that are decisions that carry minimal consequences, and there are some that carry a magnitude of consequences. But in all my years in ministry, I think the number one thing that most people never recover from, and I deal with this all the time, it will be at the root of almost every problem with a person that I deal with. It is the concept found in Romans chapter 13, verse 8.

SEC: The Core Problem: "Owe No Man Anything"

Romans 13:8

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

That little verse is one of the most absolutely profound verses you will ever find in your Bible. I do not care what situation you are in this morning, because I want to pepper my sermon this morning, like pepper in stew or pepper in something. I want to pepper it this morning with a concept: there is always something you can do. But I also want you to understand what is beneath this little verse here, which is absolutely profound. Without a doubt, the single issue, which usually lays at the center of everybody's problem, is the fact that the undisciplined and out of control spending we have with our finances, and that is simply a bad choice.

I want you to notice something and we are going to come back here in a moment. The verse said, "Owe no man anything." But the verse did not say anything about debt. I want you to remember that. It simply said, "Owe no man anything," but it did not use the word debt. I will show you why in a little while.

We are in Romans chapter 13. Romans chapter 13 is about our government. So let us start with that. I do not know if you understand the problems we are in in this country. I do not know if you understand what a travesty our government is to this very principle right here. It is no wonder this country has got the problems it has got. I am telling you right now, this is not a time in your Christian life to be straying very far from the principles of God. The changes that are going to be sweeping through this country in the next two or three years are going to be overwhelming. I would safely say that your children that are four, five, six, or seven, or eight, and nine, and are in elementary right now, are going to grow up and never know the country that you knew and understood when you were their age. That is where this thing is going.

Our national debt is \$14 trillion. After a while, the numbers do not mean anything because there is no point of reference to them anymore. Let me put \$14 trillion into a perspective. We have got about 300 million people living in America. 300 million people, you have families that are, you have kids and you have somebody who have more kids than others, but in our country we are made up of about 300, maybe more, I do not know, 300 million people living in this country. It simply means this: every man and woman and child in your family owes a debt of over \$300,000. In other words, it is going to take you and your children and their grandchildren paying out \$300,000 in taxes to ever get the debt. That is not the best part. The best part is, you ever see that thing, I do not know where it is at, but they have a board that keeps calling and running up the debt and it keeps moving up. It is not now we are at \$14 trillion, we are not going any farther. It is going higher every second we sit here and speak.

Now we can talk about it all we want. I found a great word that deals with our government that also deals with most of God's people. It is the word reality. In America, we do not live in reality. The idea that we think that we can spend \$14 trillion and come to the point where we can just have unending spending and we can do whatever we want to do and it is going to be okay and someday we are going to get it all back, it is ludicrous. The idea of this country is 12% by the conservative figures that they want you to hear. In some states it is higher than as high as 15%. We have seen the stimulus package. We have seen bailouts. We have seen the car industry get bailed out. The banks get bailed out. The loan company get bailed out. We have seen people with mortgages that they can never pay and the waste of just billions and billions and billions of dollars. People have houses they cannot afford.

I have talked with people that I have worked with in counseling over the years and in the last two or three years, and people who come in from the outside and most of you do not see a lot of people come in. People send them to me from the outside and never make it to church. I read a figure here last week, and I try to stay up on this, that the average house payment in the United States of America runs between \$2,000 and \$2,500 a month. If I owed \$2,500 a month on a house I would not sleep at night. That would scare me to death.

You realize that our country is owned by two nations as we sit here this morning. We have so much debt that we have farmed out our debt to other countries to buy our debt. Right now China has bought up \$160 billion of our debt. Japan on the other hand has bought up \$190 billion of our debt. They basically own the bulk of this country. If you do not think that when they have these dog and pony shows in Washington about Toyota and they are concerned about the 35, 40 people who got killed because the gas pedal stuck and we are going to rattle the saber and make big loud noises in Washington, let me tell you something. They are not going to push the button any farther because all Japan has to do is call in those bank notes and this country is done. One of the reasons why he says, "Owe no man anything," is because when you do, you are under their control. That is where we are at in this country. If I could give you some good solid Bible advice today, I would tell you to start building a cuisine and a diet toward Chinese food and learning how to speak Japanese.

I read an article the other day that was quite interesting where the guy said in December 1941 the Japanese empire defeated America with a crushing blow in Pearl Harbor and the crushing blow was delivered by one of Japan's greatest little airplanes, a Mitsubishi Japanese Zero. Then the guy said today some 60 years later we are still being defeated by the Japanese Zero. It is just a zero at the end of the dollar signs. We are in trouble and there is no way out of it. We are in trouble because we have violated as a nation the great principle that is laid down in the Bible of "Owe no man anything." The rest of our debt, Japan has it, China has it, and the rest of our debt has been taken care of by the feds just printing more money to cover the debt. Absolutely in this country no responsibility or accountability to any kind of financial structure or any spending discipline. In Washington DC it is a joke, it is called pork. Every bill they talk about has pork. If it was not, it would be absolutely funny if it was not so tragic. Right now it is funny because we do not necessarily all feel the effects of it but it will not be so funny.

I get emails all the time from people and I enjoy them. I got this one last week and I thought this was very timely. It is a joke. It is a joke because everybody knows it is a joke. This thing was sent to me by a friend of mine and it is all prefaced on the fact the economy is so bad. I love these.

- The economy is so bad I got a pre-declined credit card in the mail.
- The economy is so bad I ordered a burger at McDonald's and the kid behind the counter asked, "Can you have fried fries with this meal?"
- The economy is so bad that the big company CEOs are now playing miniature golf.
- The economy is so bad that if the bank returns your check marked insufficient funds, you now can call them up and ask if they meant you or them.
- The economy is so bad that Hot Wheels and Matchbox stocks are now trading higher than GM.
- The economy is so bad parents living in Beverly Hills had to fire their nannies and now have the trouble of learning their own kids' names.
- The economy is so bad that last week a truckload of Americans was caught sneaking into Mexico.
- The economy is so bad that Dick Cheney took his stockbroker hunting.
- The economy is so bad that Motel 6 will not even leave the light on anymore.
- The economy is so bad that the mafia is laying off judges.
- The economy is so bad that ExxonMobil has laid off 25 congressmen.
- And finally, the economy is so bad that Congress has decided to look into the Bernard Madoff scandal.

Oh, that is great. The guy who made \$50 million disappear is now being investigated by the people who made \$7.5 trillion disappear. If it was not so tragic and true, it would be funny. But that is where we are at today. All because of one biblical principle. All because of one biblical principle that was ignored and now has come to the point where it has compounded itself. "Owe no man anything" has been rewritten now in our country as "You owe man everything."

SEC: The Church's Failure and Personal Responsibility

There are two great examples of Bible concepts for us in this for you and for me. There is always something we can learn. The country has made the same mistakes that individual Christians make. That is simply this, this country never learns anything from history. If someone gave me, I think it was John Busquette gave me when we started our church history, "Every time history repeats itself, the price of the lesson goes up."

A second thing, and I have told you this many, many times, and this is where our country has failed, you cannot solve problems with the same kind of thinking that caused the problem. Now we see in our country, arrogance, pride, a lust for power. How do I know that all politicians are crooked? In time, everything reveals itself if you are paying attention. There may be things in time that you do not understand that goes on around you. But if you just pay attention and listen more than you talk, watch what happens, listen to what people say and watch what they do, in time, everything lays it out.

I know that every politician is crooked, I will tell you why. Why would you spend \$80 million in a campaign fund for a job that pays \$80,000 a year for four years? Would you do that? John, would you do that? Kai, would you do that? I might, I do not know. Spend \$80 million for a job that pays \$80,000 a year for four years. And then you get to spend another \$80 million to get another \$80,000 for another four years. Why would you do that? Two reasons: corruption and power.

Unfortunately, it does not stop there. I would like to say that, I would like to blame all this on the government. I really would, because I do not like it any more than you do. But when it comes to assigning blame, there is another principle we have got to follow here. Jesus said one time to His disciples, He says, "You are the salt of the earth." Now salt is a preservation concept. When you want to tan hides, you salt them. When you want to preserve meat in the old days, you salt them. It did not taste very good, but it preserved it and kept it from spoiling.

Jesus made the analogy that you and I as Christians are the salt of this earth. The job of a child of God on this planet in any age and dispensation through the New Testament local church is to be a salt to this world that preserves the world from the corruption that happens. But what did Jesus say? The salt had lost its savor. In other words, even in His time, what was the preserving effect for God in that day had lost its savor. Certainly today in the world that we live in, the church has lost the savor of the preserving thing of the Lord.

It is just something like this. When the church goes, the Christians go. And when the church goes and the Christian goes, the government goes. It would be nice to sit here and cast blame at the government and put it all on their back. But that is not true because you and I have a responsibility and accountability to be the salt of the earth and let that savor of salt in your life and my life through the Word of God and through churches preserve the country from falling into decay. We failed in doing that. We failed in doing that because we have made the same mistakes as the government has.

We know, and there is no need to spend a lot of time in this, we know that we are in the Laodicean church period. The mark of the Laodicean church period, Revelation 3, verse 17, it is real simple.

Revelation 3:17

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

Now churches are only what Christians in those churches are. You do not have good Christians in churches that turn out a bad church period. The church period is bad because the Christians in it are bad. The church period does not do what is right because God's people are not doing what is right. It follows all the way down, works all the way down. We have a bankrupt country because we have a bankrupt church. Our bankrupt church is because we have bankrupt Christians. In all three cases, the country, the church, and in Christians' lives, it is the same issue. We will not learn from our mistakes and fix them. And we will not change the thinking process that caused the problem in the first place. The issue, I think, in my thinking, I deal with more than anything else,

is that concept. And people who continue to make the same mistake and in time get their lives so complicated that they are out of the race because they are carrying so much weight. As I always say, there is always something you can do.

SEC: Practical Application and Contentment

I do not know if you know this guy or not, probably most of you do. I really like him. I really like Dave Ramsey. I think Dave Ramsey is a good speaker. I do not know if he is saved or not. He seems to be, but I do not know. I do not know if I would agree with him on everything. I never heard him talk about the Bible or whatever. But I like his approach. I like his approach, and I like the way that he has a common sense in everything that he does. I like his plan and his layout. He says you can have all the money. He is so right. It is absolutely so true. I have said it a million times. You can have all the money in the world, but if you are not responsible and accountable to somebody for your spending, then nothing ever changes.

I have had people come in. Honest to goodness, over my lifetime, I have dealt with so many financial situations. It is usually at the root of every problem. What happens is, somebody comes in and says, "Well, my marriage is having problems and this and this and that." You start peeling layers back, and you will find out at the heart of that, that was the fact that they got overhead in their spending. They got upside down in things, and it affects their attitude. Because either one, they do not know how to deal with it. Two, they do not want to deal with it. It just adds pressure and weight, and pretty soon, it starts affecting everything you are and everything that you do.

He is so right when he says you can have all the money in the world. If you are not responsible and accountable to somebody for your spending, nothing ever changes. I have had people that I have sent to financial counseling that was beyond my scope, and they had to go in and actually work through some processes and stuff. They rip up all their credit cards, and they put them on some kind of program, and maybe they got 25 different bills that they owe, and they consolidate them all down into one and give them a viable plan how that in what? Five years, six years, you could be debt free. Six months later, two years later, they got another credit card and got another \$25,000 on top of that one.

The issue is not more money. There never is the issue, in most cases, more money. There never is. The issue is common sense. You cannot keep spending what you do not have. That comes back to discipline. Let us face it, that is the missing element today. You cannot continue to pay out more than you have come in. That is a discipline problem.

I do not care what it is, dealing with marriage, dealing with your family, your personal life, or your kids. I always tell people, "You did not get into this problem overnight, and you are not going to get out of it overnight." I always give them a perspective with patience. I always try to have them leave my home with a plan. I always try to get them to see that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and it is not an express train coming your way. I always try to get them to see that no matter how bad your situation is, there is something you can do. All I want to do with people when they come over, and let us face it, there is no way that I am going to, in an hour's time, or you, in an hour's time, is going to fix somebody's problem that has been there for 10 years. But I always try to give them a plan, and always try to show them clearly, biblical

principles, that will let them work their way out of it in time. I always tell them, "You did not get into this problem overnight, and you will not get out of it overnight."

Do you know why that is? It takes time because you are not really solving the problem. You need to understand this. This is a ministry principle. You are not really solving the problem. What you are doing is changing the thinking that caused the problem, and that takes time. I cannot solve your problems, but what I can do is show you the thinking patterns that got you into that mess, and then show you the process by which you can get out. But it is not getting more money. It is not going to some counselor. It is changing your thinking about what got you into those scenarios.

When he gives you that great verse, "Owe no man anything," that is a great verse. I tell people this. I say, "You did not get into this problem overnight, and you are not going to get out of it overnight." But even though we cannot solve all of your problems tonight, we can do a couple of things. Here is what we can do. I cannot fix every mess you are in, that is going to take problems, but there is always something you can do, and right now tonight, I do not care if it is your family, I do not care if it is your marriage, I do not care if it is your kids, I do not care if it is your finances, I do not care what it is. In any given situation, we may not be able to go in and fix every issue you have, but we can start, and we can start doing one thing that in time will get us out of it. Do you know what that is? Stop making bad choices. From this point on, do not add any more weight to what you are already carrying. Do not let me take five pounds off next week, and you add ten more pounds to it. Every choice we make that does not line up with a biblical principle brings about a consequence and adds weight to what we are trying to do. Stop making bad choices and get into an accountability structure that will help you get where you want to get.

Whether you know it or not, and I am sure you do, we as God's people are to be separate from this world. Do you know why that is? I will tell you one reason it is, and it is probably not the reason you are thinking. It is because everything in this world is designed to feed your flesh. Everything. You walk down the mall. We go to the mall to see what we do not have. We do. We go to the mall, and it is 50% off. How can you resist that? We go down to the mall, 60% off. How do you resist that? We look at things that are 70% off. Going out of business sale. I know there is a company in Kansas City that had a going out of business sale up for four years.

Romans 13:14

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Every commercial you see, every billboard lends itself to what you and I do not have. Every magazine you read. Everything you see is designed to appeal to your wants. In time, my friend, when that is out of control, it breeds a concept of covetousness in our lives. It brings us to the place where we start building our whole lives about what we do not have.

Yet at the same time, I have got to balance this out for you. When he says, "Owe no man anything," we totally probably cannot fulfill it. I mean, I want you to see both sides of this. When it says, "Owe no man anything," that is not an absolute rule. That is to be taken with a concept of

where you are at in common sense. If you want to buy a house today, I have got news for you. You are going to have to get a loan. So how does that verse apply? In most cases, you are going to want to buy a car. You are going to have to get a loan. Your kids need braces. The braces jar is empty. You have got to get a loan. Some emergency comes up and you have got to deal with it. So you have got to get a loan. It would be better off if we never had to do that, but let us be honest. In life, we have to do those things. So what I am talking about here is a balance.

Remember, it was last week or the week before last, I told you the story of Matthew chapter 19 verses 16 through 20. Here was a young man that wanted to follow Jesus. He comes to the Lord Jesus and he says, "Master, what good thing must I do to be saved?" The Lord Jesus begins to walk him through the program, giving his little test he gives him, and he finally gave the Lord all the answers on every day. The thing was to keep the law. He went down and I did all of these things. So Jesus said, "Okay, okay, you did all those things. Now here is the real test. Take all that you have and give to the poor. Come and follow me." The Bible says, he went away sorrowful. You want the rest of that verse? "Because they had great possessions." Possessions, the things we possess, the things that we possess in our lives, that becomes the problem. The real problem is things.

Today, the average American, according to a national poll, the average American credit card debt is \$25,000 at 18% interest. I have worked with couples before that were so upside down in their finances that every month they had \$200 to \$300 worth of charges in bills that came in. They were overdrawn checks. I have got to tell you, if your setup is so screwed up that you have \$100, \$200, or \$300 of debt just into checks that bounce and they charge you what, \$10, \$15, \$20 for each one? You have got some serious issues. You are not going to fix that by yourself. That is not about having more money or getting a better job. That is serious dysfunctional problems. But I deal with it all the time. All the time.

People buy houses they cannot afford. That is what got everybody into this problem with losing their mortgages. Nobody ever looks around. Young couples do today, here is what they do. I have had them tell me this. I used to look at them like, "What planet did you come from?" They will come to me and they say, "We just bought a new television." Oh, that is great. Because everybody needs, I had no problem with television. I have got one. And they said, "We got a great deal. We will pay \$600 for it." I will say, "Well, that is probably for a nice TV. That is probably a pretty good deal." "But then you are not going to believe this, Bob." "What am I going to believe?" "Well, we got this one for \$600, but they had a sale on that if you bought one for \$600, you got another one for \$300." What a deal that was. It is not a deal if you do not have the \$300 to pay for it.

There has to be some kind of physical responsibility of looking around, looking behind, looking ahead. I have seen young couples buy a house and they come to the place where they are what? \$10, \$15 right up against what they have coming in. And they think, "We made it." You made it to the first disaster happens in your relationship. You made it to the first time something happens and you do not have the room to wiggle around because you are right up against the wall. You are always in everything you do. It is a principle in ministry. Look around, look behind, look ahead. Know where you are at. Know what your options are. Do not think, they do not want

something so bad that you actually say, "Well, I can do it." Well, you cannot do it. That is what happens.

This is a great principle. For those of you, as we talked Thursday night, that work your way through these things and we get to the point where these are things you are going to have to never forget in dealing with people or your own personal life. Never forget Murphy's Law: What can go wrong will go wrong. And may I add to it? It will be in the exact point that you do not need it to happen.

Let me give you a couple of good principles that have served me well over the years. I gave you this one last week, Philippians 4, verse 19.

Philippians 4:19

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

The key word there is "your needs." I do not profess to be able to get into your world and tell you what your needs and what your wants are. I really cannot. I can only deal with mine. My rule of life is this: If you have got the money to pay for it and it does not put you in a bind, who am I to tell you what you cannot do? You are between you and God and you can do whatever you want to do. The problem comes in when you do it, when you cannot afford it and you get upside down and the compounding effect. Do not ever forget, no matter what you buy, what you do, remember this: You are in a race. That race, there are weights.

So he says, "God shall supply all of your need." That verse is a great verse, but it goes along with another one in 1 Timothy 6, verse 6.

1 Timothy 6:6

But godliness with contentment is great gain.

1 Timothy 6:7

For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

1 Timothy 6:8

And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

See, one of it deals with the need and you have got to balance that out with contentment. What are you content with in your life? What am I content with in my life? Now he is not saying, obviously, he is not saying that all you have got to have is food and clothes to be happy. That is an extreme point. Remember one time when Jesus said to somebody, He said, "Except you hate your father and your mother, you have nothing to do with me." Did He mean that you were supposed to go hate your father and mother? No, what He is saying is the love that you should have for Him versus the love you should have for your father and mother should be so drastic that it appears hate even when it is not. He is not saying here that you can only have food and clothes and you are supposed to be happy with that. I thought what He is saying at all. But here is the principle.

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.

Here it is. Here is the bottom line. The real question is, what controls you today? In most people's lives, their emotions control them, not the principles. In many Christians' lives, their flesh controls them, not the Bible. The problem is when you get into a situation where you owe somebody everything, you do not have any say in what you do anymore because your life is buried and now your debt or the money you owe controls you. It dictates what you can do and what you cannot. You will never fix that by yourself. You could win the lottery tomorrow and get \$85 million. And three years from now you would be \$900 million in debt. Unless you change the pattern of thought and let somebody help you that produces that, nothing is going to change.

I look at some of you young couples in this church and know we do not have any, to my knowledge, any severe issues. The bottom line is simply this. Maybe they are out there and I do not know it. I do not know. I only know what the people I work with and what they tell me and I try to help them through it. But I know this. This will be the single thing that will keep you from ever running that race and getting to where God wants you to go because you cannot control it. It controls you and it will control you in every facet of your life because that is what it is designed to do.

Now I followed a very simple rule in my life, very basic. I am not rich by any stretch of the imagination, not worldly anyhow. I believe the true riches, and I have always thought this was a great thing.

Luke 16:11

If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, how will ye commit to your trust the true riches?

That is good casting. I have never gotten caught up to the things of life. I just never have. Yet I have a really nice life. I would not trade my life for anybody's life on planet earth. I look at things that some people think are valuable and worth things and I just do not see it. Yet I am sure there are things people see in my life that I look at and they do not see it. I was out someplace the other day and looked at a car parked in one of the places over there and a sticker on it was \$127,000. I cannot imagine. This is not a criticism. If you have got a car that is worth \$127,000, God bless you, I am all for you. But the bottom line is, in my mind, the way I am thinking, I do not understand what I can do with a \$127,000 car. I could never enjoy anything because I had to stand out there and make sure that I did not hit it. I would be into a movie someplace and I would say, "I will be right back." "You have got to go to the bathroom?" "No, I have got to go see if the car is all right." That is me.

Some very important things happened to me in the early part of my life. My mom and dad were not perfect parents by any stretch of the imagination, but they were good parents to me. I learned some great lessons from them. My dad was a hard-working man, worked in a steel mill for 26 years before it finally killed him. Seeing my mom and dad work several jobs just to get through.

They were not flagrant with their money. But I learned some great things in their life. It took my mom and dad 20 years saving money before they bought their first house. We cannot even relate to that today. We think that if we get married and do not have a house by next week, there is something wrong with us. It took my mom and dad 20 years before they bought their first house. My dad drove a 1955 Chevy all the way up to about 1962 or 63. I still remember that old gray beast, looked like a big old gray ghost at midnight. I was scared to look out the window because it looked like some big demon out there. My dad used to say, "You know what, son, always buy a Chevy six-cylinder because you can always fix them up, tune them up with a set of spark plugs and a screwdriver." Well that has changed.

But I learned some things. I built my house 20 years ago. It is not paid for, but it is all I owe. My house payment is around \$800 a month. First house I bought when I moved to Kansas City, paid \$26,000 for, lived in it for, I do not know, 15 years, 10 years, 12 years, something like that, sold it for \$75,000. Took half that money, paid the rest of the house off, took \$50,000, put it toward my house. That neighborhood, it was really nice when I moved in. It is terrible now. I have got drug dealers across the street. It is hard for me to walk my dog down the street and keep him from picking up the condoms that are laying all over the street. It is terrible. The only good thing I have got for me is that all the people across the street are afraid of my big buddy, the big brown dog. They are scared enough of him. When I walk out in the deal, they are all out there in the deal, you can smell the marijuana over there. I do not take pictures of my telescope anymore. I used to do it. I just cannot. You look like you are shocked. I just cannot. Do you want to know why I cannot? Say I want to know. Okay. Because I used to be out there late at night. You set that camera up, you get a guide star, and you get a beautiful galaxy, and you just sit there. I started doing that, and one night I just got weaving. There is a party going on across the street. I take Buddy out. Buddy does not like anybody around me. Buddy does not like. He goes crazy. And they are scared to death of it. I can take Buddy out on a leash, and they are all sitting out of the deal, and all of those kids would get up and run in the house.

I was walking down the street one night, and we all had what they were smoking, and I said, and Buddy is just going crazy. He wants to just get into them. And the guy says, "Hey, how come that dog is so mean?" And I said, "Oh, he is not mean. He is a police dog." This is a true story. My wife knows, because she is in there saying, "Oh, boy, we are going to get killed now." And he said, "A police dog?" And I said, "Yeah." He says, "Well, why is he barking over here at us?" And I said, "Well, he is trained to sniff out drugs. You got any drugs over there?" I live in that house till Jesus comes back. You know why? Because that is the only, this is the temporary thing for me. Now, you say, what happens? You get bad. Constantina wire. Bobwire entanglements around the yard. I think it is great. I still got some of my old manuals. I do not know how to make landmines out of stuff in the house.

I do not have any credit card debt. I hate them. I have credit cards, but I hate them. I do not have any loans. I do not have any car payments. The truck I drive is 10 years old. I bought Barbara her first new car last year, but probably 20 years before that. My first car, we had a new car in 20 years. You know why? Because I do not like buying new cars. I think it is, to me, it is just me now. This is me. I think it is stupid to buy a new car for \$20,000 or whatever, and then you drive

off the lot. The moment you get your back wheels off the lot, now it is worth \$15,000. Maybe that is just me. I do not know.

Many people live in houses better than me. Many people drive cars better than I drive. Many pastors have greater things than I have. I remember a pastor one time that they bought a new office for his couch, and they paid \$12,000 for the couch. \$12,000. That sofa out there that we have, I bought at Grandpa's on 5350 Highway. It did not cost \$12,000. Is anybody's rear end worth a \$12,000 couch? I do not know that. I am sorry. Is anybody's ecclesiastical posturing worth a \$12,000 couch? I do not think so. I do not think so. Now, I have met some of God's people who thought they were, but I do not think so. Many people dress nicer than me. I do not fit the national status of most pastors, and I do not want to.

Some of the greatest drawings that we have had, because people get concepts of churches and preachers, is when they come over to my house. First of all, no pastor will have you over to his house. He reaches you at the office within a month. And he has got a silk, slick, Swedish knit suit that he flies in and out on, and he comes in there. Come over to my home. My home is just like your home. Dog Odus will probably come up and wet on your leg. That just goes with the territory. I do not know what to tell you. We are trying to get him broken of that, but that is just what he does. That is just the way it is.

I want you to be... My home is just like your home. I am not any better than you. Some people would think this is a terrible thing. I was down at Sydney on your mission four times ago, and I would go down there and let you guys do it. I am sitting down on the floor enjoying who was preaching. I forget who was preaching. I am sitting back there enjoying, and a guy comes over and says, "Hey, look, if you are going to eat here tonight and stay here, you need to sit in the chair." I said, "I am the pastor." "Oh, excuse me, pastor. Excuse me." Now, some people would be ashamed to have a pastor like that. That is a compliment to me. I do not want to be like them.

But I will tell you something. There are a lot of people who have more things in life than I do and have it better off than I have got it. But I will tell you something. I am more content and happy than all of them put together. I am. I do not get depressed. I do not have anxiety. I do not deal with them. I have emotional issues in my life that I have to struggle with. I have a release to my stress. I walk Buddy down the street, let him chase all the people in. I do not covet what people have. When I walk into some of your, see some of the things that God does for God's people, I am happy for you. I do not get into this mindset where I spy out and stick my nose into your business and say, "Well, they should not have that. Why do they have that?" I am happy for you. I think it is great. I think there is not a covetous bone in my body. You know why? I have got a full cup, man. I have got that book. You show me anything on this planet that you have got or the whole world has got, put it in one big pile, stack it up to the moon and tell me what is worth what God has given me out of that book.

I feel like Paul, whenever in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 10, where he says:

2 Corinthians 6:10

As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

I have got it, man. I have got the book, brother. That is all I need. I am not saying that is, I am not setting myself up as any standard. I just learned some things. The more you have, the more you have to worry about. I will tell you something else, the more you have, the less content you are. I have known God's people to live their whole lives built around possessions. I am telling you, it just, and they never get to the true riches. Then they wonder why they have the health issues. They wonder why they get the depression in their life. They wonder why, and I am saying this, this is, and I will tell you what, this is why God has brought so many of you to a place where you can learn to get past and get to the point in your life that you get the contentment that God wants you to have, but you have to change your thinking about things.

Do you know what my single little rule is? All my life. I live by this. My wife knows that I live by this. My kids know. I never buy anything I cannot pay for. If I do not have the money, if I do not plan ahead, if I do not save for it, I do not buy it. I follow that rule all of my life. I keep myself accountable to a budget. By the way, I run the church finances the same way. We do not owe anybody anything.

Thursday night, somebody asked a great question about the tabernacle. We went through that thing and I showed them and their specific question had to do with the Ark of the Covenant. I walked through that thing. I told you that night, if you remember, I told you, if you walked up to the tabernacle and you looked at that thing from the outside, it looked like any circus tent that you ever saw in your life. There was no spiral on it. There were no church bells ringing in it. There were no big neon flashing signs that says "Jesus saves" on it. It was made out of badger skins, goat skins, and just the skins of tanned animals. If you had looked at that tent and a used army camouflage net of the period of time, you could not tell the difference between the two.

Now I will tell you why that is. Doctrinally, that tabernacle was a picture of Christ. The outside tent skin pictured His humanity. The inside stuff pictured His deity. But we can take it one step further. People laugh at us because we are in a, how did it go? The last time I heard it, we are in the basement of an antique mall. They laugh at us because we are not a real church because we do not have a, "Here is the church, there is the steeple, open the door and there are all the people." They probably learned that in the third grade.

The principle is this. The real treasure of this church is not on anything on the outside. Why are you so foolish that you think that the mark of a good godly church is what you have got on the outside? It is just like the tabernacle. The holy things are on the inside. It does not care what the outside looks like. But that is Laodicean thinking. That is being focused on things.

So I disciplined myself. I set a budget. I planned for the unexpected. The Bible says, "Confess your faults one to another." Okay, I am going to confess mine to you today. Let me share with you something that I found out about myself. I discipline myself and wait to save my money and save what I want because the bottom line is I realized that I am a compulsive spender. I see something, I will buy it because I want it. Now it is okay in a little nickel and dime stuff, but I can kill you in the big stuff. So I had to discipline myself. I had to come to the point in my life

where I realized that, and here is what I have learned out of it. This is what I have learned out of it. When I save for what I think I really want, by the time I get the money to buy it, in most cases, I really see I did not need it anyhow. But it works for me.

If something is new, we have got to have it. New car, new shoes, new whatever. I do not have it. If I do not have it, I want it so bad, I will put it on a credit card. Six months later, you get the bill in and you cannot even remember what you bought. It is in the corner now. The car has been dented. The person broke the strap on it. It is just the way it goes. I just learned from those things and changed my thinking.

There is a great song in your hymnal. A lot of great songs in your hymnal. But on page 204, and please do not turn to it, we are not going to sing it this morning, but it is one of the greatest songs to me that I, many of them are my favorite. But it is that simple little song, "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus." These guys that wrote these things, they knew more about life and trouble and tragedy than we could ever hope to know. But that old song says, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face, and this is my favorite verse. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace." Now the key word to that is, "look full in his face." Most Christians never see the full face of the Lord Jesus. Some get a half face, some get a quarter like the moon. But not many children of God ever see the full face. Because when you see the full face, and you experience the light of His glory and His grace, then certainly, as that song says, the things of this earth do grow strangely dim.

Colossians 3:2

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

The reality of all this, that the verse says, "Owe no man anything." When I saw and understood that great truth, it changed my life. Every Christian, every Christian, I would understand that concept, but at the same time, and I told you I was going to come back to this. This is where it gets real, real weedy now. You ought to owe no man anything, but every Christian ought to be deep in debt today.

SEC: The True Debt: Preaching the Gospel

Let us see what kind of debt that is. Let us get a perspective on this before we go home. Look at Romans chapter 1, verses 14.

Romans 1:14

I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

Romans 1:15

So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

You see, now that is the only real debt that we should have. That is the only debt we should have. The debt to Christ to preach the gospel and not be ashamed. The problem is we get so caught up with Visa, MasterCard, Citibank, house mortgages, credit unions, hospital payments, car payments, we just never get around to the real debt we owe. That is a tragedy. The world's debt cancels out for us every ability to pay God's debt. Only God's people could get the wrong Bible, get the wrong church, get the wrong attitude, get the wrong perspective, get the wrong passion, get the wrong purpose and wind up getting the wrong debt. But boy, we do.

The man that taught me that, not only was my parents, but I had a great model in my life. The man that taught me that and taught me the Bible taught me, and I can hear him say it now, "Bob, when it comes to the ministry and doing the work for God, you will always want to stay lean and mean." I watched him at 56 years of age when he had everything made in life. He had a pastorate at one of the biggest churches in Ohio. His salary was comparable to anybody's. He had been there 26, 27 years. He had everything that a man could ever want. He had a successful ministry. He had everything that he could ever want in life. He was set for life. He was set in that church. He was set financially. He was set in everything and every way and every shape for the winding down of his life. And you know what he did? At 56 years of age, he left everything he had and he went to New York City and he built a church. He spent the next 20 years of his life doing what in my life I have never seen another man do. He left it all. He left Canton, Ohio owing no man anything. He also left Canton, Ohio without a dime in his pocket.

His motto was, and I heard him all the time and it forged my thinking pattern in my process because he was the greatest example that I will ever have in my life of what a Christian should be and how he lived his life. He was far from perfect. He could give you a royal cussing like you never heard. There were cuss words I never knew existed until I spent some time with him. But he was a man that loved God. If you understand those two statements, you spend a little time with Moses and God in the Old Testament. He left because he had a race to run. He always used to tell me. My heart was broken when he left because him and I had dreams of going out and starting a church together. I was his assistant. In my little mind, at my little age, at my little time, I thought, the greatest thing in the world was for me to spend the rest of my life ministering with him. But God had other plans. God reached down and put in his heart that his race needed to run to New York City. He went to New York City not owing anything, not having anything except God. He used to say to me, "Never get yourself so tied down with the things of this world that when God wants to move you out and send you someplace else, you cannot go in 30 seconds or less."

That is foreign to us. That is foreign to us today. Foreign to a lot of you. It is foreign to a world of Christianity. We cannot even get to that point. We look at a guy like that now and we think he is goofy. We look at a guy like that and we say, "Oh, that is just him." No, he is supposed to be what you and I are. But what happens is simply this. We have got a debt to pay. God's debt. But the devil is so quick and so slick and the compounding effect of the things in our lives that we will not change, the compounding effect of not recognizing that with every decision, every choice we make comes a consequence. Maybe it is not a 200-pound consequence. Maybe it is a

10-pound consequence. But in time, 20 10-pounders make 200 pounds. And the race that God wants us to run, we cannot run.

My job is to help you get there. It is just that simple. That is why when I started this coming to this verse, I wanted to lay out some basic concepts of consequences in what we do. For every action, there is a reaction. Because all of your life, all of my life, we are going to be surrounded with choices. And those choices will always carry a consequence. Sometimes there will be a good consequence. Sometimes it will be a minimal consequence that will build up over time. Sometimes it will be a major consequence. Let us face it, folks, and never forget this. God saved you for only one purpose. The more we get focused on the things of this world, the more we lose sight of what that purpose is. You are here this morning, if you are saved, for one reason and one reason only: run that race. Run it lawfully. Run it with temperance. But finish for the prize.

So when the Bible simply says, "Owe no man anything," tremendous verse. Probably the single number one problem from my experience in dealing with people. I have them come from all walks of life for 35 plus years, walked in, walked out. Some of them do it. Some of them do not. Some of them come in and hear it. And like the young man that met Jesus, they go away sorrowful because they have great possessions. It comes down to the fact that we have got a race to run. The only way you will get that race run is to get in a mindset that you quit making bad choices. And then you start the process to reclaim back your life that you now are in control of it instead of all the circumstances controlling you.

I will help you. That is my job. I could sit down with you for an hour and listen to where you are at and give you a viable, workable plan to help you get to the point where you can get out of what you are in. No matter what it may be. No matter what is going on in your world, there is always something you can do. The longer you wait, the harder it is to do it. The longer you wait, the more chances you will not do it. Simply because of the fact the older we get, the less we like change. That is so true. True to me. I have to fight every day of my life to accept change because I do not like it. I know you think many times, I am up here, I am the big iron man that just, that nothing bothers and nothing deals with. That is simply not true. I have to deal with issues just like you do. In some cases, I have to deal with a hundred other issues plus my own. But that is what I get paid for. But the answer for you is the same answer for me. I do not have one set of rules for Bob Alexander and another set of rules for you. We both have to run this race lawfully and we do it by the principles of the Word of God.

With where we are going and what God is doing and how this thing is going to open up like we talked about Thursday night. Again, I appreciate the phone calls from so many of you that called me and said, "This is exactly what I am looking for. Let us get this thing going." We will. But it is things like today that you have to get back to the reality. If I am going to put a championship swimming team together, do not show up on a diving board with a hard hat and 50 pounds of divers weights around your waist. That is not going to help me in running this race.

Father, we thank you today for the Lord Jesus.