

Romans 14-15

Sunday 4/18/2010

Romans chapters 14 and 15 are such key chapters in your Bible that you cannot just jump into them without understanding really well the context of how it all works. I have told you, and we have been preparing you for this for quite some time, how these two chapters really deal with our relationship with each other and how we function together.

Last week, we really got out and talked about an area that we have not talked much about in this church. We have hit around it but never really dug it out until we had to get to this point, and that is talking about our liberty in Christ. Now we understand what our liberty is: once we have gotten saved and once Christ died on the cross, we are no longer under the law. We now have liberty in Christ.

Many people, as we saw last time, abuse that, thinking that it means you can do whatever you want to do in life and all of those things. Of course, we have learned now that that is not true. We learn now that our liberty in Christ is not for whatever I want to do with my life, but rather for doing what God has called me to do. You have heard me say it many, many times, and it is going to be an underlying theme in what we are talking about today: God has a plan for your life.

I think it is lesson number seven in your discipleship lessons that we take new Christians through that talks about God's will for your life versus God's plan for your life. God has something He wants you to do. Last week, I gave you four great verses that go along with and help you better understand your liberty.

1. The first one was in Galatians 5:13, where it talks about the fact that, yes, we have liberty, but we are not to use our liberty for an occasion of the flesh.
2. I gave you another one in 1 Peter 2:16 and talked about, in dealing with people, that you do not use your liberty as a cloak of maliciousness. In other words, you do not hide behind the freedom you have in Christ to do things that are not godly and things that are going to hurt other people.
3. I gave you 1 Corinthians 6:12: "All things are lawful," the Bible says, "but not all things are expedient." We took the word "expedient," and I told you that the word "expedient" means wise or something you want to do.
4. Then I gave you the counterpart to that in 1 Corinthians 10:23, which basically just says, "All things are lawful," and this was really the key where we ended last week, "but not all things edify."

I told you and left you last week with the fact that we, as God's people, on whatever spiritual level we are, especially us older Christians that have been around for a while, we need to do things that help young Christians edify them. That is where we ended the last couple of weeks and laid out those principles to better understand this great chapter.

Now I want to begin reading today in Romans chapter 14, and we are going to come on down through here and take a major section of this, and then we will come back and look at another

section next week. At some point here, we will move into chapter 15, and we will close out the Book of Romans. Here is what it says in Romans 14:1-8.

I. Principles of Romans 14

This chapter is built around four or five really great principles. Most key chapters in the Bible, if you will lay them out, you will find that they are built around four or five tremendous principles. My other one, which I think I have read off the top of my head and we talked about this in Bible study tonight, is Philippians chapter 4. You are going to find four or five of the greatest life-changing principles in Philippians chapter 4, and the whole Bible is wrapped around those four principles. That is the way it is here in Romans chapter 14.

In fact, here we are dealing with our relationship with each other, and there are four or five great principles in this chapter that, over the next couple of weeks, we want to look at and then put them in a proper context in our life for dealing with younger Christians or the brethren in general. You remember that over the last couple of weeks, I talked about three things you need to have in your life if you are going to grow properly spiritually. There were six, but we will talk about the first three.

I told you briefly that the first thing you have got to do is you have got to come to the place in your life where you see God for who He really is. I think this fundamentally screws more people up in their relationship with God than any other single thing that they probably do or do not do, simply because they do not have the right perspective of who God is. Of course, after you get the right perspective of God, that is why we have the classes that we have and the one-on-one that you desperately need to grow and get it all together.

The second thing that you need to come to in your life is you need to see yourself the way God sees you. Many people come into Christianity with a lot of baggage, a lot of problems, a lot of things that they have had to struggle through, and when they finally get saved, they have such a hard time many times forgiving themselves that they actually carry that on into the relationship with God and think that God cannot forgive them. In actuality, the day you got saved, you got a clean slate; old things are passed away, and all things become new.

The third one we talked about is we need to see each other as God sees us, and these last two are really the subjects of this chapter: seeing ourselves from God's standpoint and then seeing each other from God's standpoint. There are some great examples of how we should deal with each other. I talked about the ability to discern and to have discretion. We are going to define those words for you today. They are very important in your life and give you the ability to choose your battles.

I told you that there are some issues in churches that you do not have any wiggle room on. You have to deal with them because we will hurt the church. Then there are other areas where you have to realize that that is not a doctrinal issue, and you do not fight over those issues. That is what we have here in Romans chapter 14.

II. The Food Issue and Christian Liberty

The first problem we find here is food, and an issue has arisen here of what you can and cannot eat. It has always been surprising to me how so many of God's people really do not, they just try to use the Old Testament and try to bring it into the New Testament, even though much of what we know now, we talked about that to this point, the Old Testament has no effect on us.

I learned a couple of phrases early in my Christian life. I have talked about them before, not for a while, but I have talked about them before. I learned that in Christianity, you have basically two concepts you have to understand. You are going to find people who do things that are Christian, and they do things that are spiritual. Then you are going to find that there is another set of issues that people do things that are biblical and they are scriptural.

I am not concerned in my life about what is Christian or what is spiritual because so much of Christianity today is Christian, and it has the facade of being spiritual, but it is not biblical, and it is not scriptural. In other words, if we are Bible-believing Christians, then what we do, how we conduct ourselves, how we deal with issues, has not to be based on Christian principles but rather biblical principles. It is not based on spiritual concepts but rather scriptural concepts.

If you would go into most churches today, and this is not a knock on most churches, this is just a true statement, you would find that probably 95 to 98, maybe even close to 100 percent of the stuff that they do are not found in the Word of God. They do it because they have been taught down through the last three or four generations that this is what Christians do. We all know that what has happened in the last five or six generations is we have gotten away from the Word of God.

People to this day have convictions on things or preferences in their life that in reality have nothing to do with the Bible, but they make doctrinal issues out of them. One of the books in the Bible that you want to read at some point and get a handle on is the book of Galatians. It is a case in point. The New Testament church has now started, and the church at Galatia was started by Paul on one of his missionary trips through there. They started out really good, understanding all the New Testament concepts and the New Testament principles.

But then what happened? The Bible says a group of people called the Judaizers came in. What did the Judaizers do? They would come into that church and they said, "Oh, you follow the New Testament? That is great. We do too. Jesus Christ did die on the cross, did He not? But you have got to have all the Old Testament stuff to go along with it." This is one of the great books where Paul takes a personal issue with them because the declaring of the good news of the gospel and the fact that the Old Testament was done away with was his primary mission. He goes to work on them, and it is a great book.

I find that the Judaizers are alive even today. You find God's people who think that some conviction that they have, and this is the problem in Romans chapter 14, that some preference that they have. I have met Christians that actually think that there is a Christian diet that we ought to follow. This is part of the problem we have got in Romans chapter 14. You had one people who thought that you only ate vegetables, vegetarians, and the other person enjoyed a

steak or ate meat, and there was an issue over that thing. Many times you will find that younger Christians or Christians that have not grown properly, they will come to the point where they actually believe that there is such a thing as a Christian diet.

Now, let me explain this to you. I think you ought to eat right, but I think that that is your own personal choice based on the fact that you understand that you only have one body to serve God with. Jerry Falwell was a great preacher, and I heard him back in the 50s when he was really a great preacher before he got caught up on all the junk that he got caught up with. But he was a very influential person in many things in Christianity. As far as I am concerned, he died way before his time. Do you know why he died? Because he just ate about nine Big Macs every day of his life.

When you are young, you can eat whatever you want to eat, and it does not affect you. But when you get our age, you cannot. It is a place when you get 40 or 50, you begin to see how quickly your body now is rejecting, and you get all kinds of problems. There was a man that was a great preacher. He impacted Christianity, whether you like him or you do not. He was God's man, and God used him, whatever the case, whatever your opinion is. But in my opinion, he died way before he should have died. Do you know why? Because of the fact that he ate wrong. You just have to have some understanding in things like that. But there is no Christian diet.

At the same time, I run into people that talk about having a Christian business. There again, that is a Christian concept, a spiritual concept, but there is no ethical, biblical concept. The only thing that you can actually say in the Bible or life that is absolutely and unequivocally Christian is the church. You may be a Christian that operates a business, but there are no Christian businesses. You do not find them in the Bible. Of course, people get hung up on that.

I have found people that come to the point where they think that Christianity is a hard set of rules. They think that you are spiritual by keeping the rules. Of course, that does not work either. I know churches that if you want to be a worker in a church, they have got a three-page thing you have got to read that you have got to sign that you will not do this, this, this, this, this, this, or you cannot be a worker. I understand that there needs to be lines drawn if you are going to be in leadership because obviously your accountability and responsibility as a leader is much greater than the average person, but you cannot put it down on a piece of paper. If it is not already in your heart, putting it on a piece of paper is not going to do it.

I know some people who do not drink coffee. I know people who do not drink Coke. I know people who do not have anything with caffeine in it. I understand that, but that is a person's choice. This is the concept of Romans chapter 14. But please, if you find yourself in that category, do not think that you are more spiritual because you do not. At the same time, do not think yourself more spiritual because you think that you can. One thinks that they cannot, and they do not want to do it. The other one chooses to do it. It is not a biblical issue. It is a conviction and a preference.

This is the problem that they were having in the church of Rome when he is talking here. Some people will not eat pork. Some people will not eat meat; they will eat chicken or fish. Then you have people that will not eat chicken or fish or pork or meat, and all they eat is vegetables. But

the problem is that some of God's people get to the point where they try to make what they eat a biblical issue.

Most of you do not know this guy. You probably never heard of him. Some of the older guys have. How many ever heard of Lester Roloff? Lester Roloff died in a plane crash back in 1974, I think it was. Lester Roloff, down in Corpus Christi, Texas, had a boys' home and a girls' home for wayward boys, and they really turned out a lot of good people. But Lester Roloff was one of these kind of guys that he let you know in no uncertain terms what you were eating or drinking and how it did not play into what he thought should be in the Bible. He was a vegetarian. He did not drink coffee, did not drink caffeine. All kinds of things that he did not do. But for him, he would get up in the pulpit and he would let you have it because in his mind, he thought that that is what made you a better Christian. Now it may get you to live longer, and it may be a better deal for you physically, but it certainly does not make you a better Christian because there is no such thing as a Christian diet.

Then you had Pete Ruckman, who would eat anything that would not eat him first. One of the greatest times in my life was when I was at a camp where both him and Lester Roloff were there. It was great. They got along; they loved each other, got along. But it was the first time that I ever saw Roloff not say something to somebody because it was a thing where he could not intimidate Ruckman like he could when he was preaching to a crowd. You can say a lot of things to people who cannot say something back than you will face to face. Here they were sitting there, and old Lester Roloff, at breakfast, would take bacon and cut the fat off the bacon. That is where he was. He would have salad, and I remember Ruckman. Ruckman had a pork sandwich that was piled that high. He had Tabasco sauce on it, barbecue sauce on it, onions on it. When you go through, you have potatoes, you have coleslaw, you have all this stuff. He would take the bread, put the pork on it, piled it high, put the coleslaw on the sandwich. I know it was reasoning, it all goes to the same place anyhow, so why separate it out? He would pack that thing up and put it on there, and I remember sitting there watching old Ruckman, and he not only ate his food, he wore his food. It was all over his face, all over his shirt. Here he is over here, slamming it down like some pig in a silo, and here is Lester Roloff just cutting it out and eating it just right. Otherwise, I was there, there is a contradiction, and yet they both got along.

I am telling you, some of God's people get to the point where they try to make what they eat a biblical issue. In defense of them, here is their reasoning: "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost." I understand that; that is true. So you should not defile that temple, and that is a great point. There are some things in this life that will obviously, you can eat that will defile your temple or put into this temple that you do not want to do. There are some clearly things. Illegal drugs is one of them. Obviously, you defile. My dad died when he was 54 years old. My dad probably should still be alive today. Do you know why he died at 54, and he was a saved man? Do you know why? Because he smoked four packs of cigarettes a day, at least. He smoked the real deal. He did not smoke the ones with the filters on them, and he went after them. Old Gold was his deal.

I remember when my dad got lung cancer. My dad was about a 200-pound guy. When he died, I carried him. Before he died, I picked him up and carried him, and he must have weighed 55

pounds. But he was born in Maryland. All our family are coal miner families. We all come out of West Virginia and the mines and all of that stuff. He probably was smoking since he was nine years old. He was born in a log cabin. I saw the cabin. This is not one of these "my dad used to walk 10 miles to school." No, no, no. He was born in a log cabin with six other brothers and three sisters. I have seen a log. They did not have electricity back in the 20s, back then. It looked like something out of Daniel Boone's time. I saw it when I was a kid. They took me there. It is probably gone now. He comes in a place where he should still be alive today. But do you know why? He took something into his body that killed him because the doctors told him that the lung cancer he got was because of the cigarettes that he had put in for so many. Even after he was told that, and he did surgery. My poor dad, all the way down here, all the way over here, flipped him back over, took one complete lung out, and then took another half a lung out and sewed it back up. He could not even breathe because of what cigarettes did to him. We would look around the house, and I would say, "Where is Dad?" She says, "I do not know." And I would say to my sister, "Where is Dad at?" She says, "Oh, he was out in the yard a minute ago." I would walk back after he lost a whole lung and another half a lung. I would walk down to find my dad, walk into the garage. Do you know what my dad was doing? Just sneaking a cigarette. I do not know what to tell you. A guy said to me one time, "Will cigarettes keep me from getting to heaven?" No, but it will get you there faster.

Some things just really you do not want to defile your body with. Booze is another one. But the truth of the matter is, there are a lot of things that will defile your temple. In truth, anything in excess will. That is why the Bible says in Philippians 4:5 that all things be done in moderation. There has to be a balance in Christianity. You have to recognize that anything you do too much.

Now I am going to make a statement that probably will shock many of you coming from me. Maybe somebody will gasp at it. But it is a true statement. That even applies to the Bible. Do you realize that you can spend so much time in the Bible that it ceases to be good for you and it starts to be bad for you? I will tell you why that is. God's concept is, Proverbs 11:1, "A false balance is an abomination in the sight of the Lord." Now we think the word "abomination" is a terrible word. And it is. It is a terrible word. But you ought to take a word study sometime and find out what God counts as abomination in the Bible. You are going to find it is not a deep, dark human sacrifice thing that you think it is. A lot of it is the everyday things that we do. The Bible says a false balance in your life is an abomination. A couple of weeks ago or months ago, we saw that showing discord among the brethren is an abomination.

We need to have a balance. You are supposed to be like a sponge. All of you women that mop floors or clean your house, or even some of you guys that help them out, you know how that works. You can take a sponge, and it is a great deal. You can soak up water with it and get that thing up. But pretty soon, you do not soak up any more water. It just pushes the water around. Do you know why? Because it is full. Then what do you do, ladies? You take it over to the sink or the bucket and you wring it out, and then you pick up some more water. That is the way we are. We are sponges. You come on a Sunday morning and Thursday night and one-on-one and everything that we do, you absorb. You take it in. You take it in and you absorb it. But at some point, you have got to wring it out. When you do not, you get out of balance.

It is everything. I know a pastor, I will show you what I mean. I know several, but I have got one in mind right now who is absolutely strict on keeping all the rules. If you do not wear a suit to his church, he looks at you like you are not even spiritual because he thinks every pastor needs to wear a suit. If you ladies do not wear dresses to his church, you can never do anything in that church. All the men have to have ties. There is a dress code. They have a hair length for all the young men. And yet, when that pastor gets up and preaches, he is at least 400 plus pounds overweight. Do you know what he has done? He has one set of rules for you, but he has another rule for himself. Oh, he has got a suit on, 3X. He has got a tie on. He will keep the rules someplace in his life. He just forgot that gluttony was a sin. See how it works? I am telling you.

Now in Romans chapter 14, we have a great illustration of how Christians think when they do not know how to apply the Bible and how we as older Christians need to understand and help them through it. They had an issue of what somebody could eat versus what somebody could not eat. Now let us go back to the Bible for a minute and let us end the food issue here for once and for all.

Colossians 2:11-16. We have talked about this before. You do not even have to turn back to it. You can follow along if you want here. Colossians chapter 2, verse 11, we talked about because of the cross of Christ, Him dying on the cross and paying the price and nailing the Old Testament law. The Bible clearly said, because of that, "Therefore let no man judge you according to meat, that is what you eat, or drink, what you drink, coffee, tea, caffeine, no caffeine, whatever the case."

You remember our church at Corinth, do you not? We talked about that last week, how the church at Corinth had similar issues, and the church at Corinth was a whole church full of babies. They just absolutely were. They had similar issues in 1 Corinthians chapter 8. Remember that story? The Christians were going down to the market on Monday morning, and they were looking down there, going to buy their groceries for the week, and they walked through the meat section. There they saw signs up here: "Hamburger, 50 cents a pound." Over here, it was "Hamburger, \$1.25 a pound." Somebody said, "Wow, what is the difference in price?" Somebody said, "Well, the meat for 50 cents a pound was used in the pagan temples yesterday for their sacrifices, and they did not use it all. So they sell their residue back here, and you can buy it a lot cheaper if you buy that." The other meat that is more expensive, a dollar and a quarter, that has never been used. That has just been cut off the deal this morning. But both meat is good, and there is nothing wrong with it. It is just the fact that they cannot sell it as new meat because they had it down in the pagan temples, worshipping in their God, but they had some left over, so the guy buys it back and sells it.

A Christian says, "You know what? I am buying the 50 cents a pound meat." The other Christian said, "What? You are going to buy meat and eat meat that was down in the pagan temples yesterday with all those demonic gods and all those stone, graven images? When the Bible says, 'Thou shalt have no other God before me,' you are going to eat that meat?" The guy said, "Absolutely." "Not me, I am buying the dollar 25 a pound. I am going to stay true to God." Do you know what Paul said when he finally had to deal with that issue? He says, "What is wrong with you? Do you really believe that there is anything to those dumb," he uses the word "dumb,"

"stupid idols? Do you really believe there is any credence to that?" He said, "There is nothing wrong with buying the meat that was used down there." Some people had come to the point that they had taken it so far that they thought there was such a thing as Christian meat and demonic meat. He lays them out very clearly on it.

I will tell you another great concept. Another great concept is found over there in Acts chapter 10. Remember when Peter was up on the housetop, and he was struggling with the gospel going to the Gentiles because he had been an Orthodox Jew all of his life, and he remembered what the Lord said in Matthew chapter 10 about not going to the Samaritans, half Jew and half Gentiles, not going to the Gentiles at all, but only going to the lost house of Israel. He was a pork-abstaining, Mosaic law follower who held the law very dear, but now God has changed it. What did God do? Took him up on the roof. He went into a trance and saw a vision. What was the vision? God brought down a big old picnic blanket, laid it on the deal. Do you know what was on it? Gates Barbecue, Arthur Bryant's Smokehouse, everything that he was not allowed to eat. Peter reacted. He said, "Whoa, God said, 'Eat that thing, Peter.'" Peter said, "Not me. I am a Christian. I have never defiled myself with anything unclean." Do you know what God said? He says, "Look, buddy, that may have been true, but I just changed it all, and whatever you once called unclean, I am telling you what is clean now." It took him three times, and he still did not get it. Finally got it.

Look at 1 Timothy chapter 4. Here is a great one, and this should end it for you. Then we are going to go to work showing you how to deal with it.

1 Timothy 4:1-5

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Now, once you get through these verses, that should take care of your Christian eating program. Again, I am not saying you should not take care of your body. You need to be smart. I believe you should. I believe you have one body to serve the Lord with. If you let it get out of shape, if you let it get to the point where you eat too much of things, my own personal history of health in my family is a disaster. Diabetes is in our family all the way back. High blood pressure. High cholesterol. So when I was young, it did not bother me. But when I turned 40 and got into the point where you start getting older, and I go for my physical, the doctor says, he said to me, "You have diabetes in your family, do you not?" And I said, "Well, yeah, why? How do you know that?" He said, "Because you are borderline diabetic." At that point, I had to cancel out everything in my life that meant anything worth living. Life without Twinkies and Ho-Hos has

been a cruel burden to bear. I now had to learn to drink Diet Pop. I hate Diet Pop. If you go out to eat sometime with us or we all eat there, you will find when I order what to drink, I always get diet with some piece of slice of lime in it, and that is to kill the taste. But it is one of those things, what am I going to do? I had now, instead of going to the grocery store and picking up orange juice for breakfast, I have got to find this stuff that has got all this low stuff in it that it does not matter. Now you have got to eat and you drink it, it does not taste like orange juice. It tastes like antifreeze. That is where you are at.

I think you ought to take care of your body and eat smart. When a doctor tells you, "You have a problem," hey, this is your liberty. God may have in His plan for you to live to be 70 years old, but by your plan, you are going to do what you want to do because you have liberty, so you die when you are 50. It is just that simple. I am not saying you should not eat, take care of your body, and eat smart. What I am telling you is it is not a doctrinal issue in the Bible. Ephesians 3:4-5 clearly say that if you have faith to eat it and thank God in your heart for it, then go ahead and eat it. He says that nothing is to be refused because it is sanctified by the word and prayer, verse 5, but you have got to use the aspect of "all things are lawful, but not all things are expedient."

Now that is my liberty in Christ, but at the same time, and this is where we get into the problem here, I do not have a right to use my liberty as an occasion of my flesh. In Romans chapter 14, we have a weaker Christian who does not understand that great doctrine yet. When it comes to eating, here are the rules you want to follow. It is real easy. If you have got faith to eat it, go ahead and eat it. You have the liberty to do it. You have to make the judgment call on it, but there is no doctrine on it.

In my life, I have never had a problem with eating anything. I love raw oysters. Some people just gag at raw oysters. I love them. I can eat 80 of them in a setting. I do not eat them anymore because, you know what? One day, instead of looking at the thermometer out on there with all the mercury in it, I just started looking at myself. I was glowing, so I thought to myself, I better get off the thing.

Do you know what balut is? When I was in the Philippines, a balut is duck eggs that they take and bury in the hot sand for about five days, just to the point before they begin to rot, but the embryo begins to develop. Before they rot and turn bad, they dig them up. Do you know what you do? You take those duck eggs. It is a delicacy. You take those duck eggs. You put a little hole in the end of the shell, and you suck the little thing out, the little bird out, and drink the juice in it. Now look at some of you. When I was at a church in the Philippines, that was a delicacy. That is like me taking you out to Krispy Kreme. Come on, you get the point. I had eight or nine. I had to have 30 people with me, but about eight or nine of us were up in the mountains, up in the villages, and we sat down to eat, and that is what they had. I watched some of them girls just about die. I watched some of them get sick. I watched some of the guys. Do you know what I did? I always. You know me, I always have got to make a big deal out of it. What I did is I took that egg, cracked that thing, and I have got to tell you the truth. It just tastes like. It was warm because it was buried in the sand. It tastes like chicken soup. It really did. It was not bad. It was the thought of what you were doing. I chugged that sucker down, and I sucked that embryo out

of there, and then everybody is going, "Oh, my people are going, 'Oh, oh, oh.'" Then just to throw it in their face, it had kind of a developed body, and it had little. You know how little birds have little nails on their finger? Just to throw it in their face, I took one off and took it in my teeth with it, and I said, "Got any more of those?"

Down in Central America, they do the same thing with turtle eggs. I never had a problem. I ate iguana lizard one time on a stick. Do you know what an iguana lizard is? They cut his tail off. They gut it out. They take a stick and run it through its rear end out through the top of its mouth. They put it on a fire, turn it around, and you eat it after a while. Tastes like chicken to me. I do not know. Some people cannot do that.

Do you know what bay-loo is? Bay-loo is an African drink. We were up at the Maasai back years ago, and we were up there. We were up there. You can hear the lions at night roaring. You see the giraffes going through your. They do not have backyards, but you see the giraffes going through the deal. They have a drink that is a friendship drink. It is not alcohol or anything. I do not think it is. It did not taste it, but it is called bay-loo, and they make it themselves because they cannot go down to 7-Eleven and buy the ingredients. They make it themselves out of the trees and the things like that, but when they make it, because it is a friend drink, you know what everybody does? They spit in it. Then they stir it up, and their idea is, "Because I am your friend," and then give it to you, and "we are all friends." Now, I know that that is not good sound reasoning, but that is where they are at. Do you know what? Here is the problem. If you want to win them to Christ, do you want to reach them with the gospel? Then you have got to be their friend. In their mind, do you know what you have got to do to be their friend?

How many know what Rocky Mountain oysters are? Me and Mal Sabaka, the last time we were together. This was probably late 80s, early 90s. I do not remember. Mid-90s, maybe. We were in Montana, and we were doing a dual revival with about four churches up there. We were staying on a gigantic ranch. Out here, we call them farms. Out there, there are ranches. This ranch was about 300,000 acres. It was incredible. When they go out to check their cattle, they are gone two or three days. Well, me and Mal were staying there, and all the bunk guys were coming in. They are all Christian, and they like good preaching, and they were thrilled that me and Mal were staying there. They gave us a bunkhouse. At nighttime, I could not even find no way around the sky; there were so many stars. In the morning, just crisp air, we would sit down there and look up about two miles on a mountain ridge, and there would be 500 elk up there. Incredible stuff.

I learned so much that weekend. We were city slickers, and they wanted to give it to us because that is just the way. These guys were cowboys. Back then, I learned the difference. I bet you do not even know this. There is a difference between cowboys and caballeros. You did not even know that, did you? Now, you can put that in your Bible someplace. I do not know where. These guys were cowboys, and they were real cowboys. They wore the leather chaps and the boots, and they were there, and we were staying with them. I have Nikes on, and maybe a pair of combat boots, and Mel, he has got his Palm Spring shirt on. We are not fitting in very well. They are rubbing us.

The first thing they did one morning is they. We walked out there and had breakfast, and they cooked the breakfast up, and they had a bunch of rifles on the deal there, and they say, "Let us have a little target practice," because they thought they were going to shoot us. Well, they did not know we would shoot us, and we hung right in there with them. So the next thing they are going to get is they are going to get us at lunch. So they are castrating the cattle. That is what they do. They will castrate the cattle and immediately throw them castration parts on the fire and cook them up and eat them for lunch. Now, I do not mean to be gross, but this is what they do out west. I know you do not get those down at the Plaza or the Westport, but I am telling you, there is a world outside Kansas City. I do not think you will find Rocky Mountain Prairie Oysters at Hy-Vee in the deli section. People are so naive. I should not even finish telling this story because I would have grossed you all out, so anyway, I will not.

But people, if you have got grace to eat that, then go ahead. If you can bow your head and ask God to bless it and thank God for it, it is not a problem. But the thing is this, if you cannot do it, that is okay too. But what you do not want to do is you do not want to make the fact that you cannot do it a spiritual issue versus somebody who can do it. By the same token, if somebody can do it, then you do not want to come to the point where you throw it in somebody's face that they cannot. You do not want to become a stumbling block as a mature Christian.

Out there in Montana, it was just a good old fun time. Mel and I got them, and they respected us the rest of the week. Do you know what we did? We are frying all these things up, and they think we are going to gross us out. Well, me and Mel figured it out already. It came to the point where it was a situation where they are cutting them off and putting them on the pan, putting them on the grill. They say, "Hey, boys, come over here." They are all laughing. "You know what Rocky Mountain oysters are?" I said, "No, we do not know. We do not know anything. What is that? It looks good. Are you cooking them up? You want to have some for lunch?" Me and Mel looked at each other and said, "Yeah, we sure would." He said, "Well, cook you some up." Me and Mel looked at each other, same mind. He said, "No thanks." We walked over to the raw ones in the pan, picked up four or five each one, and we are popping them up. I both threw up. But you know what? They respected us the rest of the week. We were walking to the church, big cowboys. "Let me get that door for you, sir. Shine your spurs, boy."

If you can do that, that is okay. Some people can eat anything. Some people cannot. It is okay either way. But I do not make it a doctrinal issue, and neither should you. That is the whole bottom line. If you cannot eat it and have faith, then do not throw it in the face of somebody who cannot. The last two points are very important. You have got to be smarter than the problem. If you have more light, then you should also have more grace. Let me add one more thing to it. If you have more light and have more grace, then you should also have the discernment and the discretion to know how to do it.

III. The Kingdom of God and Offense

Look at Romans 14:14-17 here in this great chapter.

Romans 14:14-17

I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Now the greatest verse there I want you to see in verse 14, it says this: "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself." That is an incredible verse. That verse is just there, but that is an impacting verse that you will never, never probably fully understand. Do you know what it says? I heard this years and years ago from some of the old guys that used to preach. They used to say this: "Everything bad in this life is a good thing twisted." Boy, that is so true. That is true. Everything in this life that you can think of was intended for man's good, but sinful man gets it and uses it for sin.

You realize, and I know a lot of people, and I am not going to say this right, natural medicine. Is it holistic? Holistic medicine? There are a lot of people that believe in that. Do you know why they believe in that? That is a Bible-based concept. You realize that for years and years in the 15th and 16th and 17th century that when people had a disease, they would do something called bleed them. Do you know why they would bleed them? They would bleed them because they would think that the blood was part of the problem, so they would bleed them to get the blood out, thinking they were getting the bad out, and they would get better. Well, you know what happened? When you bleed somebody and it takes the blood out of them, you only get weaker. It was not until what, the 15th or 19th, early, middle 1800s that somebody read in the Bible that "the life of the flesh is in the blood." So they started giving transfusions instead of bleeding somebody.

What do you think? The American Indians, they did not have a Walgreens to go to. They have stuff that, you know, we dig oil out there, and we dig oil out there in places like that, and you see it bubbling up on the ground. Do you realize that the American Indians used to drink the oil or the liquid and used to use it for some kind of serum that helped them with certain problems? I believe personally that everything God put down here on this planet, He put here for man's good. Man is the problem. Somebody says, "Life is a mess." There is nothing wrong with the world. It is the people in it that is the problem. I believe that those things have a basis to them all the way down the line.

The guy that discovered penicillin, he got it out of the Bible. Jesus Himself carried a trained physician with Him, Luke. It was the Black Plague that swept across Europe in the 1200s. The Jews and the Christians did not get it. Do you know why they did not get it? Because they were following the Old Testament dietary and cleansing laws, and they were washing their hands in running water while the Europeans were dipping their hands down in a bowl and putting the germs back on. There is something to it all. Maybe you cannot fathom it all today with all of the

things that, the way the things have changed in the world, but I am telling you that is where God started it.

I do not know if you know it or not, but the greatest over-the-counter thing you can get if you have got congestion, you have got a cold, is something called Mucinex. But you go try to buy it. You have to sign everything away in your life except your firstborn child. Now Mucinex is something that man designed. It is an incredible drug, but you know what happens when people get it? They make meth out of it. God created tobacco to be grown, but not to be smoked. Do you realize of all the ingredients you have got, or study sometime, that rat poison is one of them? Tobacco is one of the greatest ingredients in rat poison.

Marijuana. You come to the point where we look at marijuana, we know marijuana for what it is, but you realize that all the medicine you get, the reason why you have to go through a pharmacist and get a doctor, is because it has all got some kind of drugs in it, codeine. Do you realize in World War II that every guy that hit the beach and every guy that parachuted in had a little first aid pack that he wore? Do you know what was in that? One or two little vials of morphine. Now you know what he did? If he got wounded and he could not get a medic, he broke that vial out, he stuck it in his leg, and it eased the pain. Do you know why they took them away after the Normandy invasion? Guess. They were easing their pain all right, but it was not when they got wounded. Man will take everything that God does that is right and turn it around for wrong. That is just the way it is.

150 years ago, a Methodist circuit-riding preacher, he carried three or four things with him on the circuit. Do you know what he carried? He carried a King James Bible, he carried a musket, he carried a hymnal, and he carried a flask of whiskey. The whiskey was for medicine. I remember the old boys back then, even when I was around preaching, when they got sick and they got cold, they had something they fixed up, some mixture that they fixed up, and they would be sick one day, and they were okay the next. Part of it was whiskey. Do you realize how much of the medicine you take has an alcohol base in it? God intends it for good; man takes it, he uses it for bad. Remember it was Paul that told Timothy to "drink a little wine for my stomach's sake and I am often in infirmities"? There is nothing unclean of itself. It is unsaved man who is the problem.

When I was 12 years old, do you know what I got for Christmas? A chemistry set. Try to give your kid a chemistry set today. Try to go find one to buy today. You hear what they make an atom bomb out of it, or they will be selling drugs out of your garage. What place could be more harmless than Brookside's Science Toy and Hobby? Down in Brookside. How many have ever been there? It is a great place. I love going in there. Did you know the FBI monitors that place? Why? Somebody stealing a Erector set? Somebody stealing telescopes? No. They sell pharmaceutical things for chemists. All the different things that you can get, and so guys go in there. They were getting a little suspicious where when the Joe, the scientist, walked in and said, "I need about a quarter of a pound of this kind of stuff here." And somebody else says, "And I will take about an eighth of a pound of that." And they put them in a little jar. Then somebody comes in and says, "I want 600 pounds of this." They are making drugs with it. Man always screws it up.

The Bible says there is nothing unclean of itself. So for a Christian who follows the Bible, there is nothing unclean in itself as long as you do not use it to sin. But if a Christian thinks it is wrong, here is the problem: if a Christian thinks it is wrong, then to him it is. That is why, why does he do that? Because he does not have the light you and I have.

He says in Romans 14:15, "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably." Now here is another great word, charity. You talk about words that are absolutely misunderstood today with the wrong definitions. If you go over there in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, you have got the great chapter on charity. Yet if you got any other Bible, the new NIV, they have taken the word, in the KJV they have taken the word "charity" out and put the word "love" in. Because our idea today of charity is love. Yet in America, there are 50,000 kinds of different love. But charity is the old English word that is the epitome of love that carries with it nothing back. You give simply because of the fact that you give something unconditional. We even use it to give to your favorite charity. When you give to your favorite charity, you do not want nothing back. You are giving it because out of the excess, and you want to help somebody.

That is why he says in 1 Corinthians chapter 13:

1 Corinthians 13:1-7

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity is the unconditional acceptance based on God's unconditional acceptance and love toward you and me. Charity is the mark of a mature child of God to suffer with a younger Christian and to help them. Did they get the light? It does not mean that you give them a total free pass. You have a right, you have an obligation, you and I as older Christians, to give grace to people, to help them, but they have an obligation that they have to grow.

Now here is what I have learned over the years in this thing, and this is something if you ever get into the ministry or you guys run this place down the line, you better learn these things. When you have younger Christians that do not grow properly, in time their convictions or their preference become their self-righteous doctrines. You do not have to go to too many churches to see that legalistic concept. I remember years ago when I was a youth pastor, we had eight or nine

youth groups around the city that we all got together every other month and had some big activity for the kids. There was a church over in Kansas, a Baptist church, that would never be part of us because they thought that the fact that the boys wore blue jeans and the girls wore slacks and their kids all wore dress slacks and dresses, that they did not want to associate with us, and obviously it was a legalistic concept that they thought that the dress code made them more spiritual. But you find legalistic Christians the same way.

My job is to help you, but you have to help yourself. I mean, I can have all of the answers in the world, but you have to apply them, and you have to do your part. We all have issues in our lives on different levels. There will never be a day in your life that you do not have issues, but you have always got to do the right thing in responding to them.

Now if you are going to deal with marital problems and couples having trouble, this is going to be one of the biggest problems you face because they do not understand what their rules are to each other, and they do not understand how that they have got to apply these things, and they have got an obligation to grow. When a couple comes in and they have marital problems, the woman has an obligation to herself to grow spiritually to be a better wife, and the man has an obligation to grow spiritually to be a better husband. I hear it all the time from the guys, "Well, how come you are always jumping on me, and you never say anything about her?" Well, that is not exactly true. I mean, I will drop the bomb wherever it needs, but I will come back to the end of the day and say this: Do you know why I hit you harder? Because you are supposed to be the leader. You are the one that ought to be leading the way, not stopping the way. You ought to be out in front. You ought to recognize that you have the responsibility in this marriage. Why am I harder on you? The same way I am harder on my deacons in this church than I am on just the average Joe that comes in. Why? Because you took an office with a responsibility to it, and when you got married, you took the responsibility of being the leader. You say, "Well, I did not know that." That is not my problem. You know it now.

I mean, I can have all the answers. They are all life problems, but if you are not willing to apply them and do them, it is grace on my part, but you have got to grow on your part. We all have issues in life on different levels. We all need to grow in those issues, no matter what it is. My job, I cannot solve your problems. Now I know you come over, and you lay them out, and I tell you what you do, and you think I solve them, but I really do not. I do not as a pastor, nor does any pastor. I do not have the ability to solve your problems. My job is to create a biblical environment in this church that is conducive to solid biblical spiritual growth in people's lives. That is all I can do. I will give you grace. I will give you tolerance. I will give you long-suffering. I will give you patience. I use discernment. I use discretion, but the bottom line is you have to be the one who has to do it.

Did you ever go down to the Kansas City Stockyards? They have all, I do not know if they are down there anymore, but they have all those corrals. Did you ever notice how they got the cattle from one pen to another? They had a catwalk with a fence on both sides. It was about this wide. When a cow went from one to the other, the cow could not get any wiggle room. He could not go left or he could not go right more than a foot. The only way he could go was to go straight. That is a lot what spiritual growth is and what a church ought to do. The church has to have patience.

It has to have tolerance. It has to be long-suffering. It has to give grace in unmeasurable amounts. But at the same time, you cannot let it be any wiggle room in the thing. You have got to always keep moving forward. When you do not, that is when you have problems. That is when you have problems. Yet I say that, and you know as well as I do, there are issues in any church that you better have a zero tolerance on. That is just the way that it is.

But you have to give young Christians, like Romans chapter 14. You have to understand which way. Hey, if I had a vegetarian in my church, I do not know that I do. But if I had a vegetarian in my church, and I knew you were big on that, and that was your deal, and you invited me out to eat someplace or we went out to lunch someplace, do you know what I would order? I would order fish. I would not sit there and order the biggest steak on the deal, even if I am paying for it. I would order fish. I would not try to go against where you are at. I respect where you are at.

I preached in churches in the past where the preacher, you had to have your hair, you could not touch your ears. Everywhere you went, not when you were preaching, but everywhere you went, you had to wear a suit. Now to me, that is as stupid as you could ever have in your life. But when he would invite me over to preach, do you know what I would do? I would get a haircut, and I would pack three or four more suits. Now I could have said, "Well, let me show him. I will show him who has got liberty," and I could have showed up in a polo shirt and jeans. But I did not because he was the weaker one, and the Bible says, "He that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." So I went along with it because I understand it does not mean anything, but to him it is a problem, so I am not going to be a problem. In that, down the line after three or four years, I got a chance to talk to him about it.

I had heard through the grapevine that this guy was so much into this, a pastor wearing a suit because they get the idea that that is your mark of being spiritual. He went skiing out in Colorado and wore a suit under his ski suit. Now I had heard that from several reliable sources. It had never been confirmed. One day he was struggling in his church. The church was not growing. He pulled me aside because my deal was blowing out the walls, and he saw that, and he pulled me aside and he said, "Can I ask you a question?" He said, "I trust you," and he said, "I have had you here for three or four years now." He says, "Tell me, from your perspective, I need a fresh set of eyes on this. What is wrong here? Why is not this church working?" I said, "Can I ask you a question? Honest question, kind of personal but honest." He said, "Well, sure, Bob, go ahead." I said, "Is it true that when you went skiing four or five years ago, under your ski suit, you wore a three-piece suit?" He looked at me and he said, "Yeah, it is true." I said, "Do you want to know how to really win people to Christ in his church?" "Yeah, I really do." "Here is what you do. Go out and buy you all the used cars you can get. Put them out in your lot because you have got a big lot. Put a sign up, 'Christian Car Sales.' Every person who goes in to buy a car, give them a tract." He said, "That sounds kind of." I said, "No, it sounds goofy, does it not? But you know what? You will have a better chance of winning people to Christ that way than you have this way." I said, "People in this town drive by your church, and they look at you like we look at the Amish. You are 50 years out of date. You actually get up there and talk about the fact that if you do not wear a suit, you are not spiritual. Do you know these people in this town cannot afford a suit? You cannot make those things doctrinal issues. You just cannot." But when I went there, I

did exactly what I knew I should do because I would have never got that opportunity if I would have gone to show him what liberty is.

You have got to use discernment and discretion. I am old school. I am. I was telling Kyle, I love Kyle's dad, Dan, because he is a coach, because he is old school. I look at myself in the ministry like if I was coaching football, I would be a Woody Hayes. Out of date, dinosaur. Woody Hayes was old school. He did not put up with a lot of stuff that guys get in. You did not do it right, he would slap you. You did not do it right, he would hit you with a helmet. That is the way I was raised. He did not tolerate goofiness. He just did not. You did not perform, you got nailed. He had one thing on his mind, football and win the game. Now, I know that is probably out of balance, but the bottom line is simply this: They do not make coaches like that anymore.

I was in Raytown South, and they fired a guy up there, Bud Lathrop, great guy. They fired him for using harsh language. If I had known that, I would have fired my mom and dad a long time ago. I read in the paper this week, you can give the finger to a police officer now and get paid for it. Some guy got a ticket he thought he should not have, flipped the guy off, and the guy wrote him back another ticket for disorderly conduct or whatever. He took it to court, and the police department had to pay the guy \$4,000 because they said it is his constitutional right to flip off a police officer. Now, I am going to tell you, I was raised with you respected authority. I can honestly say, honestly, maybe you are different. I never got a ticket I did not deserve. My standard line was, and I learned about the third time, he got me in a 65, and I was saying, he pulled me over, and he said, "I am going to give you a ticket." I said, "I was only going 72," and he says, "That is good, speed limit 65." In my mind, I thought I was okay. In his mind, the law said no.

I could never think of doing that to a police officer. When a police officer comes up to me, it is "Yes, sir," "No, sir." When I get stopped, and I have not been stopped for a long time, but when I get stopped by a police officer, do you know what I do? I already know what he is worried about in life. I will put my hands up on the steering wheel. I just sit there. The last thing you want to do when he pulls out is get out of the car and walk back and say, "What did you stop me for?" You do not want to do that. I sit there, put my hands on the deal, and I just sit on my hand on there. I just put my hands right there because I want him to know he has got nothing to fear from me. I respect authority. I could never do that. But that is me. See, I grew up in an era where a lot of you older guys did. Nobody respects authority today. Young kids, they do not. Maybe some of you do. Maybe most of you do here. I do not know, but you know it is true.

I have things that I do not like. I think that when I grew up, when you walked into a building, you took your hat off. Now you just wear hats sideways, frontways, backways, and everywhere. You never heard me preach on it. I never heard anything about it. But that is a preference, you see. I believe that when you pray, you take your hat off. But that is me. See, you do not hear me get up and say, "All right, today I am going to preach for all you people with hats on." You do not do that.

I have actually had on Bible study night guys that come in that talk to me, and I notice they have got an NIV or another translation of the Bible, and they will come over to me and talk to me, and

they will say, "You know what? I know you preach the KJV." I never say a word. They will say to me, "Well, I know you guys all use the KJV Bible, and I use the NIV because I just understand that better." Do you know what I say? I say, "That is great. You keep on using that, Dan." Because you know what I have learned? If you give them grace to grow, if God grows them, then they will grow out of whatever they are in. It is just that simple. Because if you keep growing, you will grow out of it, and that is all there is to it. You do not have to worry about it anymore.

As the last part of Romans 14:15, he says this: "Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." Look at Romans 14:16. What a great verse this is.

Romans 14:16

Let not then your good be evil spoken of.

You know, you can do the right thing at the wrong time in the wrong manner without discernment and discretion, and you can cause all kinds of problems. As 1 Thessalonians 5:22 says, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." There should be nothing in my life as a mature Christian that is more valuable to me and more protective for me than young Christians. There is enough out there in the world that will hurt them without me hurting them.

Listen to me. I am telling you, as a Bible-believing child of God, if you try to do what is right, you are going to get unduly criticized. You are going to get everything you do, you are going to be attacked on. People will always blame their failure and a lack of spirituality or maturity on somebody else. You just have to know that.

I heard years and years ago an old guy says, "You know what the ministry is to me?" And he told the story about a guy, a dad, and a boy and a mule going to town. Had about five miles to go. So they start out, the dad and the boy walking along, calling the mule behind them, just talking. They got to a house down there, and a guy walked out, and he said, "Well, you guys are really stupid. You have got you walking down there where you have got a good mule to ride. Well, you guys are really dumb." So dad and the boy got on the mule. They are riding it together now, going downtown. Went another house, somebody came out, and said, "Well, I cannot believe you two grown men are riding that poor horse by itself, going to break its back." So the dad got off, let the boy ride, walked down there, another house came out. Somebody came out and said, "Well, look at that snot-nosed kid making this poor daddy walk where he rides that mule." So the daddy got the boy off, he got on the mule, and he started down around, and he went to another house, and somebody came out and said, "Look at that man making his poor boy walk while he rides that mule." So they finally got to town, and both the boy and the dad were carrying the mule. Welcome to the ministry.

I am not talking about that. I am talking about understanding our liberty in dealing with young Christians who do not have the light that you and I have. Give them time. You do not let them misuse the liberty or the knowledge you have and become a stumbling block. It is that simple.

Look at Romans 14:17, a great verse.

Romans 14:17

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Now explaining the kingdom of God, we talked about that in Bible study a couple of weeks ago. We now know that that is the spiritual kingdom inside you when you get saved. Notice it says the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Now I know, and you know this is true, maybe not true here, but it is true for the most part. We live in a world of baby Christians. You can always tell a mature Christian by four things. I heard this years and years ago. It is the truest thing I have ever heard. I heard an old boy say one time, "If you want to find a mature Christian, just look for four things."

5. Find out first of all what he loves.
6. Find out second of all what he hates.
7. Find out third of all what offends him.
8. And fourthly, find out who he hangs out with.

He is like, "I will tell you everything you need to know about him." Boy, that is so true. But people get offended so easily, thin skin, no grace, hold grudges, prideful, unforgiving, spiteful, forgetful, just like the church at Corinth.

It is a great verse back in Psalm 119. I think it is one of the greatest verses I have ever had in my own personal life. It is Psalm 119:165.

Psalms 119:165

Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

You know, if you know the Bible and you know God, and you are secure who you are in Christ, and you have a sound mind, sound doctrine, sound word, sound speech, sound faith, let me ask you, what on this earth could somebody say to you or do to you that would offend you when you have the book and the peace that passes all understanding? What in the world could somebody do or say that you could not absolve in the book that God gave you if you really love that book more than life? That is what it comes down to.

It is about, he says, Romans 15:1.

Romans 15:1

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

That is the key. That is the key. That is the key. Look at Romans 14:19-20.

Romans 14:19-20

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

Now look at Romans 14:20. "For meat destroy not the work of God." Why? Because we just read that meat was not part of the kingdom of God. We are not to get into issues over that. Look at the last of Romans 14:20. "All things indeed are pure," we talked about that, but look at this: "but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence." You have got to understand the last part of verse 20. The weaker Christian thinks he is sinning. You have got to help him. You have got to help him get through it. You do not throw it in his face that he is not, it is okay, and you brag about what you can do.

I deal with people all the time. You get somebody comes in one-on-one Bible study. Last Thursday night was one of the greatest examples you ever had in your life. If you were here and you saw that kid had come in and had a question about tongues. Now I know what tongues is, and I know how to deal with it and the whole nine yards. But you know what? I have talked to that kid, and that kid is trying to learn. I was not going to drop the hammer on him just because I have got the truth, and he does not have the light. I am not going to do that. I am not going to do that at all. Yet I had people coming up and say, "Why did you not hammer that guy? You should have dropped the bomb on him." If he would have come in with an attitude and wanted to fight, then that is a different story. He did not come in that way.

I have had people all my life. I have learned this: It is better for God to tell you you are out of line than for me to tell you you are out of line. I will tell you. Now some people you have to say, "You are out of line." But at the end of the day, it is much better. I have had people. We had a guy came to this church probably about three or four years ago, and he was a nice guy. But he was one of these guys who believed that the real Jews over in Jerusalem are not the real Jews. He believed now the Jews are the Gentiles over here in America that came over from England. He thinks the Jews over there are not real. He came to Bible study four or five times, and he is a really nice guy. Never caused a problem. He wanted to go to lunch one day. I said, "That is fine." When he sat down to eat, and we ate, having a great time. He said to me, and when he said this, I knew where he was going because some of you guys know how to read signs for turkeys and deer and how to read signs for people. He said to me, he says, "I hear in your Bible study that you use the word 'Jew' and the word 'Israelite' to be one and the same." And I said, "Uh-huh." And he says, "I really find that interesting." He says, "You know, they are not the same." I said, "Oh, really?" I am eating. I said, "Where did you get that?" And so then I quoted the verse in the Bible in Acts where Paul calls himself a Jew, and then took him over to Romans 11:1, where he calls himself an Israelite. He had never seen that before. See, I did not get in a fight with him and talk about how dumb he was and stupid he was. I just showed him a verse that clearly undid what he just said was true. He looked like an. Do you know what he said? Nothing. Do you know what I said? "You can eat the rest of those fries." Where do you go with that?

A guy comes into church on Thursday night a while back, and he says, "Well, I believe the church is going through the tribulation period." I said, "Oh, really?" He says, "Yeah." I said, "Give me the definitive verse in the Bible on the tribulation." He did not have a clue where it was. Do you know how stupid you look when you make a statement like that, then somebody asks you to prove your point, and you do not even know where to go? Well, that is much better than me saying, "Well, you are really stupid if you believe that." No. I will let. I mean, if, when I

drop the hammer, I am going to come after not what you know. I am going to come after what you do not know because I know what you know better than you do not think I know it. That you know it. That you know that I know that you do not know how that works. But I would not attack the guy in most cases if he is just, if I think he is somebody who just does not have the light. But I want him to go home and let the Holy Spirit of God work on that. "Well, why did I not know that Paul was an Israelite and a Jew? Why did I not know he said that? Why did I, why do I not know where the tribulation thing is?"

I had a guy say one time, "Well, I do not believe the rapture." And I said, "Really?" He said, "No." I said, "Why not?" He says, "You show me the word 'rapture' in the Bible." I said, "You have got a Bible?" He says, "Yeah." I said, "Show me the word 'Bible' in the Bible." Find it yet? Not in there. Now, you know what? Sometimes that is all you have got to say. The Holy Spirit of God takes that and works it through him, and he kicks himself. Did you ever say something really stupid that you should not have said? And then the rest of the day you want to kick yourself in the rear end because you said it? Well, I never have, but you obviously have. You always say, "Sure we have." Sometimes that is the best thing you can do.

Now, he says down here in Romans 14:3:

Romans 14:3

Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

That is why. Hey, listen, if God can take you and me where we were at and work with you and me to get us from weak Christians to be strong Christians, why cannot we do the same for somebody else? That is what it is all about. We are told to receive him in Romans 14:1 on the basis of God's receiving us. That is just being smarter than the problem. These things are not Bible doctrines in most cases, but personal preferences or conviction. They are not based on the Bible. The Bible says, "He that is strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak."

I heard a great motivational speaker one time. I like to listen to motivational speakers because I do not know if you know it or not, but most of their motivational principles are right out of the Bible. Zig Ziglar is a great motivational speaker. There are several others around. I heard a guy, and I listen to him whenever I can. I do not get much time to do it, but I always learn something from him. Many times they will click a principle of a message or something, or they will give me a great outline. They do not even know it because you cannot get motivational principles out of the world. You have got to get them out of the Bible and then mask them as being out of the world.

He said one time, or somebody said one time, he said this: "Little men talk about people. Big men talk about things. But great men talk about ideas." Now in a motivational thing, that is a great saying. That will get you 50 bucks a shot to get in, just for that. Because that is a true statement. Little people are always talking about other people. Big men talk about things. You see it all the time down the road, "my wife, my dog, my shotgun," or whatever it is. They know, "the bigger the boys, the more they are, what a toy." That is true. But great men who are

successful in life, they talk about ideas because they are always thinking how to better things or to do something. I thought to myself, that is a great three-point outline, and that is true, but I am going to add a fourth one to it. It is true. Spiritual men talk about people. Big men talk about things, but great men talk about ideas. But spiritual men talk about God and what He has done. Boy, that is the bottom line right there. That is what we ought to do.

Now like Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter here." The ministry is people. You never allow yourself to get sidetracked. God has a job that He wants you to do. I have a couple of basic little rules that I have followed all of my life in the Bible. I learned them at a very young Christian age, and thank God for it, but I have never deviated from it, and it has served me well. One of them is this: I never overemphasize something more than God does in the Bible. The second thing is I never underemphasize something more in the Bible than God does.

You see, I told you when we started, God has called you to do a job. God has called me to do a job. He really has. I do not get caught up in the issues that drive your emotions that do not really matter, that waste the time, that pull me off task. I cannot afford to do that. I do not know what He has called you to do. I just know that He has called me to do. God did not call me to establish local churches, but probably in the course of my life, I look back this week just thinking about putting this message together. I can trace about 20 or 30 churches that young men that I have trained in the ministry or started churches, maybe more than that. God did not call me to start revivals, though God, through my years of preaching, I have seen some great revivals. God did not call me to be an evangelist or build a school or run a Christian newspaper or even to write books, though God has been good to me. I have written four or five, and we have got a website that goes all over the world trying to put it out on a webcam where you can get it live wherever you want to go. I thank God for that. But that was not my job.

Do you know my job? I feel like, I told you this a couple of weeks ago, I feel like Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:8, when he claimed himself, he laid for himself out, he says that he was a Jew born out of due season. Do you know what that means in your Bible? That means that Paul realized that he was the greatest guy to win the Jews to Christ. He had the background, he had the training, he had the burden, he had everything he needed, and he was the greatest guy in his mind to reach the Jews for Christ, but God never sent him to the Jews, He sent him to the Gentiles. Paul was like a fish out of water. I told you a couple of weeks ago, that is the way I am. I feel like Paul born out of due season. I do not belong in the 21st century, probably even the 20th. My high day would have been back in the 1700s and the 1800s, when you could preach the book straight, hot, and true, and you could just nail it out. I am not good in this society we are in. I am just not. I am too black and white with things. But I, like Paul, God called me for one particular job, you see, and I had to deal with that and settle it.

You see it here in my ministry. 85% of our church is couples that are 40 or under. We have a real thing for reaching young married couples and young singles and all of that, and we get older couples that come in, and that does not take away from the older couples when you understand your job because our job, the Bible says the older ladies ought to teach the younger ladies. The Bible says the older men ought to be with the pastor trying to bring the whole thing about.

Everybody has got their job. I cannot tell you what your job is. I only know what my job is, but you see it in our ministry here.

Do you know what the Lord did? He did not let me be born in 1800 or 1700, even 1600. That would have been a great time. He did not let me do that. He stuck me down in 1950 and gave me the last half of the 20th and maybe a few years in the 21st. Do you know what he did? He took a book that Christian scholars and Christian educators and Christian celebrity pastors had left and abandoned and replaced in the lives of young men with a piece of godless trash to destroy their faith. Then you know what he did? He reached down over heaven.

I was watching something this week, and it was a documentary on World War II, and kind of a panoramic view of somebody talking. It was real footage, and it showed about a thousand guys all from the back charging across the field. I looked at that and I thought to myself, "You know what? Now what is the deal here? Look at that, a thousand guys. They all dressed alike. They all got the same kind of helmets. They all got the same rifles, same packs, same boots. You cannot tell one guy from the other." A thousand guys out there. I said that was the way God looked at this planet. A thousand guys. It was the same world that God reached down and pulled me out of this mess and gave me the job that He gave me to do. At the same time, you ask yourself the same question: Why did God reach down over the banners of the heaven and save you for the job that He wants to call you to do?

God reached down over the banners of the heaven, got me saved. I looked, and somebody said, "How would you equate your life?" I said, "Well, before I was saved, I would equate myself as a rebel without a cause. And after I got saved, I would equate myself as a rebel with a cause." Because I stick in the nostrils of every sanctimonious Bible-denying teacher, preacher, you are ever going to find on this planet. I have never gotten along with them, never will get along with them, never try to get along with them. Do you know why? Because God pulled me out of the pits of hell and saved me and gave me a street sense education and then put me with some of the greatest men in the world who loved that book before they died and got me a good dose of that thing at the Philadelphia church age and then let me cross over and delay the sin and called me for one purpose, and that is to guard that book so every young man and young lady that wants it in the last part of this mess before Christ comes back can have an absolute standard in your life. Some people like that, some people do not. I could care less.

Look at Romans 14:4.

Romans 14:4

Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

You know what? If that is what God called me to do, what do I care if you please you? What do I care if you like it or not? The bottom line is as long as God is pleased, and that is my job, that is when I will do it. My job is to take every young man and every young lady that God sends this way, and as we saw there in Nehemiah 8:9 last week, our job is to give portions to those who nothing was prepared. My job is a rear guard action. My job is to hold the line in the face of an

apostasy that wants to overswell this church like a tsunami wants to take out the islands. My job is to build a New Testament church as hard as it is, and maybe it is impossible like I said, but my job is to teach that Bible straight, hot, and true, and kick the hell out of anybody who wants to get and mess with that book. That is a nasty job. Somebody has got to do it. You know what? That is what He has called me to do, and maybe that is not your job. That is mine. In that job, I have never tried to get pulled off of my task.

Somebody gave me great advice about 40 years ago. They said, "Bob, find out what God wants you to do. When you are sure that is what God wants you to do, then you put every energy and all your might into doing what He has called you to do." That was the greatest advice anybody ever gave me. I will not get caught up with people and the things that do not really matter. My job is to understand that in a church, everybody gets a fair shot. My job is to create an environment that is conducive to your spiritual growth, that when you walk in that door, wherever you are at, whatever you are struggling with, you hang out here immediately. You can start to grow through that thing and get past that thing and find out what God wants you to do. That is the job of any church. I am to look at God's people, and I am to see them as God sees them, and then I am to receive them as God received me. I am to give them every chance to grow. I hold them accountable. I hold them responsible, but then I get them to see themselves as God sees them and then see the plan and the mission that God has for them.

Romans chapter 14 is a great chapter on showing you and me how to stay focused on not getting off task. The little things that baby Christians get involved in that are not doctrinal issues, they consume most of our time. That is what was happening in Romans chapter 14. That is why he is laying out to them, "Do not get caught up in those issues. Stay on task. Stay focused. Choose your battles." When you see a young Christian come in, help them realize that they are there. God may have brought them here. God may have sent them here. You give them every opportunity. If they do not grow, then they will go, but give them the opportunity that they need. Our responsibility, younger Christians as older Christians, give them the grace to grow, but keeping them accountable and responsible in that growth.

IV. Discretion and Discernment

Two words I gave you, and I am going to close with this. If you do not get anything else out of my message, get these two words. I told you last week that 90% of my ministry is redefining things. Here are two definitions you want to take home with you. When you come through the book of Proverbs, the book of Proverbs is one of the five wisdom books, but you will find throughout all those books, two key words, and I have laced them through our message today: discretion and discernment.

Proverbs talks about how a young man gets into the Word of God. He does what he is supposed to do with the Word of God. He gets discretion, and he gets discernment. Now let me tell you what they are.

- Discernment comes in a young man or a young lady's life by experience in working with people. This is why I try to get you involved with people as quickly as I can. You prove

yourself around here, and you show that you have got my heart in ministry and want to do what is right, and you are not some Pharisee someplace, and you are going to stay and do what it needs to do. You are going to get a good shot at it, and you know what you will get in that? You will get discernment.

Do you know what discernment is? I talked a little earlier about some of you guys that we have got some great hunters in this place. Norbert, you probably do not know Norbert. I do not think they are here today. Norbert is probably one of the greatest turkey hunters in the whole state of Missouri, if not the whole country. We have got great deer hunters. We have got guys that can do that, and you know what deer hunters do? They go out and they go out weeks before deer season, and they look for signs, rubs where they are rubbing their antlers up or on the thing. You hunt for turkeys, you know what you do? You go out and look for the scratching where they are scratching the leaves back to try to get the food that is underneath the leaves. Those are things you look for. I had a guy out there in Montana that was one of the greatest trackers in the country. He could track somebody through rocks. You just look for all the things he could do. Great thing.

But in everything in life, there is a process that if you spend your time studying it, you can learn how to track it. In Christianity, there are signs that you want to look, and you learn about circumstances, people, situations in the Bible. When you get good at it, in time, you get something through the Word of God and through your ability to start looking at the principles and using the principles, you get what the Bible calls discernment.

- Discernment is the ability to know what to do on any given situation. Discernment is the ability to see a situation for what it really is and not get caught up in what it appears to be.

Very frankly, most of God's people can never get to that point because they will not understand the great principles. Discernment is key in ministry. Discernment is your ability to see the situation and know what to do based on what you have.

Then when you have discernment, the second thing is discretion.

- You see, discernment is knowing what to do, but discretion is knowing when to do it.

Because you can do the right thing at the wrong time. You can do the right thing in the wrong way. You cannot have discernment in it. Many decisions I make, and I have to deal with people, do not like it because they are not in my position, and they do not see what I see. The discernment is seeing the thing as it is, being able to watch the sign, see where it is going, know what it is going to be, and deal with it before it gets to that point, but discretion is knowing when to deal with it.

I will give people all the grace in the world. I will give people grace to work through any problem they have as long as they work through it at the end of the day. I say it all the time: I do not care what you have done. I do not care what problems you have. I do not care where you are at this morning. All I care about is where you go from this point on and your walk in your relationship with God.

We as older Christians have to look at the younger Christians that come into our church as the greatest single commodity we have. We need to take them in where they are at, not be judgmental toward them, open our arms, receive them, but not the doubtful disputations. I do not care what shape they are in or condition they are in when they come in. I do not care if they are a rank alcoholic or they have got needle tracks all up their arms. I do not care. All I care about is this church being the church of the New Testament that he is talking about, that we understand that our money in the bank, spiritually speaking, is the people that walk through that door and how we interact with them and give them the chance. Does it mean we do not hold them accountable? Does it mean we do not say, "You know what, I wish you would not do that here?" Does it mean you do not hold them accountable, but it is how you hold them accountable, see? It is discernment and discretion.

You can see from Romans chapter 14, and we just cracked it today, what a great chapter that is. My goal is to take, as I say many, many times, everything we have got now is moving in the right direction to give every young man and young lady, no matter what level you are on. Help the older ones, help me, bring the young ones along, the ones that are in the mid-level range, keep moving in that direction and help the younger ones, and then take every younger Christian who comes into this church and say, "You know what, you have got a clean slate as far as the Bible." That is why I give books away back there. That is why when I get a visitor, and somebody, I will give them Bibles, I will give them books. I want to have an investment in the fact that you might want to do what is right in the Bible. I cannot think of a better way to do that than to give you something about the Bible or the Bible or whatever to help make that investment because this is a church that cares about your spiritual growth. This is a church that wants to help you get to where God wants you to be. Romans chapter 14, my friend, is a great chapter.