

Romans 14

Sunday 4/25/2010

SEC: Introduction to Christian Association and Liberty

Today, there are some great principles in Romans chapter 14. Romans chapter 14 begins to deal with our association with other Christians. Paul begins to take this chapter and talks about two issues, showing how there is so much pettiness in Christianity. Chapters 14 and 15 are all dealing with how we get along with each other as Christians. Romans 15:1 really sums up both chapters where it simply says this:

Romans 15:1

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

That is truly the role model for you and for me if we call ourselves mature Christians. We are to be the role models for younger Christians in everything we do. I understand that we are all human and we all make mistakes. But what Paul is talking about here in this chapter are some of the issues that you want to sidestep and really not make them biblical issues because they are not.

We have talked about and learned about the concept of somebody having a conviction about something, and it becoming what they prefer, or what we call a preference. We have talked about that versus something that is doctrinal and found in the Bible. I have introduced you to another concept that kind of goes along with this, and that is the aspect that there are a lot of things that we find in Christianity today, and even find them in churches and God's people's lives, that are Christian from a Christian standpoint. They are spiritual because they bring God into it, but in reality, they have nothing to do with being biblical and scriptural. In other words, they are not found in the Bible.

I think that is really what Paul is trying to get across here when he gets into these two issues. We saw last week the first one, and it was a case study on eating meat. There had been an issue that he was dealing with about people who had come to the point where some people were vegetarians, and other people were eating meat. The weaker Christians were thinking that if you do not eat meat, you are more spiritual or it makes you a better Christian than somebody that eats meat. In other words, they were coming up with a kind of a Christian diet, like we see so many things today. If you do not eat certain things, you are a better Christian. We looked at all of that and talked about it.

Today, we are going to talk about the second issue. When you put these two together, it really sets up an example of many issues that we have to deal with. He just chose two, but within these two examples, you get the real point. The point is not about eating or special days. The point is basically that you and I, if we claim to be mature Christians, need to understand how to choose our battles. We need to know when to stand for something and not stand for something, and to give somebody grace in some area of their life because maybe they have not got the light in the Word of God that you and I may have.

I want to begin reading this in Romans chapter 14, and we will come down through the same verses and talk about another aspect of it. Remember, all this goes together with understanding the great concept that we laid out two weeks ago, and we are going to come back and build these things into that, which was understanding your liberty in Christ. For those of you who are new, and to refresh your memory because we all forget things, remember what we are talking about here: now that Christ died on the cross, you and I are no longer under the law. We are not under the Ten Commandments. We have been set free from the law. We looked at it a couple of weeks ago, and now we are under grace, and with grace comes liberty.

The Bible says that all things now are lawful, but it also says that not all things are expedient. We talked about that word being wise. We talked about the fact that all things are lawful, but it goes on to say that not everything that we do will edify either God, ourselves, or somebody else. What we have learned from this is the fact that, yes, we are not under the law, and we are under liberty. There are many places you and I could go, and things we could do, that really do not violate a Bible principle as such. Yet, there are still things that we should not put in our lives because they do not edify. The number one thing here that he is talking about is for you and I, as an older Christian, to never become a stumbling block for a younger Christian.

SEC: The Stumbling Block Analogy

I saw one time when I was in Chicago, and I never forgot this. This has been many, many years ago, but police officers used to carry a long nightstick and used to call them Billy clubs. Now they call them PR24s, and they have completely changed the whole thing. But back then, they used to carry a Billy club, and it was a long club, about that big, and it was pretty thick. They would whack somebody over the head with it, and that is what they used before they had to shoot somebody. I am sure there were people who whacked them, then shot them, but anyway, that is what it was for.

When I was in Chicago with my parents, and we were coming down out of a building, some guy must have shoplifted something. He ran out of the store and ran down the street. The cops back then walked beats; they did not have all the cars they have now. A police officer came up, and this guy got from about here to the last chair out there. This cop was kind of overweight, and there was no way he was going to catch him, and he certainly could not shoot him. But I found that day that those kind of guys who had been on the force for 20, 30, 40 years, that Billy club was more than just something to whack somebody with. It was a tool.

I was just a young kid, and I never saw anything like this in my life. That guy was running, the cop just stood there. He took his Billy club, flipped it around, and he threw that thing on the ground. It worked its way up, and that guy, running, caught it between the legs, and he fell flat on his face. The cop walked up, put the cuffs on him, and I thought to myself, "That was neat." At that point, I wanted to be a cop. Then I saw a house on fire, and firemen came in, and I wanted to be a fireman. My life was just everywhere that way.

But anyway, years later, I thought to myself, "That is exactly it." This guy was running. Now, I know he was a criminal, and he was running away from the law and all of that, but he was running. What the cop did was he threw his Billy club out, and that Billy club became a

stumbling block that tripped him, and he fell flat on his face. I have thought of that many, many times in my own life with people, and I would love to stand up here and say that I have never been a stumbling block to anybody's life, and that certainly would not be true. We all have at some point or the other. But the bottom line is, we do not want to consciously do that, causing a younger Christian to stumble and to fall in their walk with God. Some Christians have a hard enough time working through the issues of just being a new Christian. They do not need people who are supposed to be more mature Christians putting stumbling blocks in their life and in their path with the Lord.

So, we have been talking about your liberty in Christ, and we will get into that more today as we look at these other issues here. You are going to learn some things today about why things are the way they are in your Bible, and I think you will enjoy it.

SEC: The Issue of Special Days

Romans 14:1-8

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

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.

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.

One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

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

For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

Father, we do thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus today. Lord, I thank You for the opportunity to speak to these dear folks today. I pause this morning to look at how good You have been to us in this church, and Lord, even since the first of the year when we decided to move up to the next level and steer a more serious course about ministry and our relationship with You. I think we have seen more people saved since we started the first of the year, Lord, than I can ever remember in years gone by in this church. You put Your stamp of approval on what we are doing, and the blessings of Your hand are upon us in all that we do.

I thank You for the people down in Warrensburg whom You allow us to minister to, who have no church and no place to go, and those young kids down there that cannot get up here on Sunday,

that there are men and women in this church that are willing to go down and drive a long distance and be there for them. I thank You for the group in Wichita. Lord, I have known those folks down there for almost 30 years, and Lord, I know how much they love You and love Your Word, and how they hang on to everything they can get, every tape they can find. Lord, it is a privilege for us to send our young men and young ladies down there to minister to them and to take those three or four families and to help them.

Lord, we look down here because we know, Father, that our job is one of reproducing ourselves. I first of all need to reproduce myself in these men and women here. Then they need to produce themselves in other people, and in time, this church needs to produce itself with other churches. Lord, we have already seen the very infant stages of that, and help these young men and young ladies as they go down to minister Your Word to these people. Lord, thank You for being so good to us and for giving us everything that we have ever needed, that Your hand has been there every turn of the way.

Lord, we come to this passage today. Help us to continue to grow. Never let us ever get to the point where we stop growing spiritually, but always let us look around and look at those people that You have given us and our responsibility not to hurt them, but to help them grow. To be there to give them everything that they need that they might become everything that God wants them to become. We will thank You and praise You now in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

The first issue we talked about last week was eating meat versus being a vegetarian. Now the second issue Paul begins to talk about is the issue of what we call special days or holy days. He talks about this down here in Romans 14:5-6. Let us read it again:

Romans 14:5-6

One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

Here is your issue, and it is the issue of special days. Here is what the problem is: some people here are viewing Sunday as a special day of the week, kind of like a holy day. Then you have other people that think that every day is a holy day. They take that route, "This is the day the Lord hath made, let us be glad and rejoice." Then you have other people who think there is no such thing as a holy day or no special days, and every day is alike. This is where you have to be able to see how these things are, and people actually get into these things. People actually come to the point where you find these three different areas right here that you are going to deal with when you deal with people.

It never ceases to amaze me, and I see it all the time, and I am sure you do too, how little God's people really understand the Bible. We are a people of God who basically are oblivious to the Word of God. We have no idea what God said, what He meant when He said it. I get the impression that most of God's people in Christianity are like that little proverbial rat in a maze

where you have a piece of cheese at the end, that would be our heaven, and we just bump our way through the maze of life trying to get there. But in actuality, if you were a smart little rat, you would have a little map in your back pocket, and you would find the cheese just like that. Well, God has given us, as rats, a little map, and that map shows you exactly how to get where you need to get. But it never ceases to amaze me how God's people really do not understand the Bible.

About five or six weeks ago, our government passed a healthcare bill. If you remember about that, they were in a frenzy. They were trying to get it done before the final session was done, and all of that was staying. So they stayed there for long hours, and finally, it came down, and they were going to take the vote, and they finally took the vote on Sunday. Oh my goodness, as I watched the news and I watched what the opposition was saying, and all of the things that were going on, they were talking about all the things of Obamacare, and whether you like it or not, that is your material. But the thing that I found interesting was this: I remember a couple of senators getting up, and they were incensed, they were enraged, that we would do government business on God's day. One of them said, "I just think it is totally irresponsible and wrong to conduct government business on the Sabbath."

SEC: Sabbath vs. Sunday and Historical Context

There are so many people out there that think that Sunday is the Sabbath. In Israel, they were told not to do anything on the Sabbath in the Old Testament, so we are not to work on Sunday, the Sabbath, and all of those things. The truth of the matter is, it is a little bit more than that if you know your Bible. If you are going to observe the Sabbath, if you go back to the Old Testament, you cannot even cook on the Sabbath. They had to cook their food the day before. You cannot feed your animals. You cannot, in fact, in the Bible, in Acts 1:12, there is what is called a Sabbath day's journey. In other words, on the Sabbath, you can only walk so far. If that were true, you could not go to church, you certainly could not go to the mall, you could not go to a ballgame. You are basically under house arrest for that day if you follow the Sabbath. You cannot build a fire, you cannot gather wood, you cannot fix meals, you cannot do anything.

In the Old Testament, there is a reason for that. Here is the point for you to understand about the concept of holy days today: you need to understand what those holy days in the Old Testament represented. Israel was given the Sabbath, and they were given that Sabbath based on Genesis chapter 2, where God worked six days, created everything, and then the Bible says He rested. Some people actually think that God got tired, that God worked six days like you and I did, and then on the seventh day, He just went, "Oh man, I am beat, I am going to take a break." You laugh at that, but actually, that is what people believe. My mother told me that many, many years ago, and I believed it until I was grown up, 30 or 40, because she told me that. Many times, people say that because they do not know what else to say.

The truth of the matter is, if you know anything about your Bible and that chart over there, you know that there is a doctrinal reason in the Bible why God worked six days and then He rested on the seventh. In Genesis chapter 2, in the first three or four verses, He tells you that when God came to the seventh day, He sanctified it, He made it holy, and He set it apart from the other six

days. Why did He do that? He did that for Israel because that seventh day represents the Millennial Sabbath that is going to go to the nation of Israel. It had nothing to do with me. Somebody says, "Well, Sunday is the Sabbath." No, no, no. In the Bible, the Sabbath is Saturday, and not only is that a problem for you, but it starts 6 o'clock on Friday and goes till 6 o'clock Saturday. Then we come to Sunday, which is not the seventh day. Sunday is the first day of the week. You see, you have to know and understand a little bit about the Bible.

When I was a kid, we had what we called the blue law, and some of you older folks probably remember the blue law. I do not know why they called it the blue law, but the blue law basically said that you could not work on Sunday. Today, we live in a world where you can do anything on Sunday; there is no remnant of the blue law anywhere. When I first moved to Missouri in 1975, into '75, '76, Kansas was still a dry state. You could not buy liquor or alcohol in Kansas. Today, you can get it anywhere you want; it is no longer a dry state. Somebody looks back there and says, "In 1976, why was Kansas a dry state?" There was some other state, but why was Kansas a dry state? If you wanted to drink booze, you had to go over to Missouri because Kansas was still feeling the weight. They all fell out of the Billy Sunday days when he preached on prohibition, and they still had made those laws, and those laws were on the book. As they came along and got farther down, and people got farther away from everything, they took those laws away, much like the blue law.

I remember going to church as a young kid where you had to eat at home because the restaurants were not open, and you were told from the pulpit, "If the restaurants are open, do not go there because you are violating the day of rest." I actually remember that based on the blue law, and you did not work on Sunday back then for anything in the world. I remember preachers getting up and they would talk about the fact that if you had to work, and they were going to fire you if you did not work, then you had to do it. But you should not work on Sunday because Sunday is the Lord's Day. That is the issue we are dealing with here in Romans. Some people are looking at Sunday as a special day, other people are looking at every day as a special day, and there are some people saying, "They are all the same to me." That is the issue that he is talking about here.

The blue law came into being because of a group in America back in the 1600s called the Puritans. If you know anything about your history, you know that the Puritans came in two groups. There was one group that was very fundamental, very Bible-believing, and very much evangelistic; that would be your Pilgrim Fathers that came over. But I guess in the next 20 or 30 years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, some 20 to 30,000 other people came over, and many of them were the other brand of Puritans, and those were the Calvinists.

If you have a King James Bible there, you will find in the dedicatory, and that is the opening remarks where it says, "To the Most High and Mighty Prince James, Defender of the Faith." When the King James translators wrote the King James Bible and put it out, they put what they called the dedicatory in it. A dedicatory really tells you why they did a Bible. It goes down through there, and they tell you that your King James Bible was written against two people groups. It is the only Bible in the world that in its beginning, in the front of the Bible, tells you that that book was written against two groups of people. The reason why you cannot buy a King

James Bible today in any bookstore that has a dedicatory in it is because that dedicatory is pretty rough on people today.

But if you have the 1728 edition of the King James Bible and you have a dedicatory in the front, if you read that thing down through there, you will find that that King James Bible, the translators who translated that, wrote that Bible in defense of criticism and torture and persecution they were getting from two people groups. The first one he says in there is "Popish persons." You can figure that out on your own. The second group written about is a group called "conceited brethren," and those conceited brethren would be the Puritan groups that were very right-wing, left-wing, or whatever you want to talk about.

Remember the Salem Witch Trials? The Salem Witch Trials took place in Salem, Massachusetts, what, 1692, somewhere like that, 1692, 1690, somewhere like that. We read in history about the Salem Witch Trials, and if you read anything at all on it, you will be told today that it is one of the darkest times in American history, and it is. But what were the Salem Witch Trials? I know we watch television, and the spooky movies are all put up there, "Salem's Lot," and all that witchcraft and all that stuff. But the Salem Witch Trials were simply what I just said: in Salem, Massachusetts, a group of Christians started deciding who was witches and who was not. Basically, what they did is they took probably, I think the total was something like 20,000 people that were actually burned at the stake for being a witch. Of course, it is one of the darkest times in church history.

People look at that and they scratch their head and they say, "Was there really witchcraft back then?" Well, no more than there is today. But that is not what happened. The group that burned these people were Puritans, and they were so strict on the law because they did not call them Puritans for nothing. They were such hypocritical, pharisaical people that if you did not do it the way they told you to do it, they would kill you, much like the Roman Catholic Church. Add to that the depravity of their old flesh; once they were in power, they used the religion that they had to go around and say, "You are a witch, you are not, you are a witch, you are not, you are a witch." If they had a grudge against somebody, they just went up to the guy and said, "I saw this woman out in the backyard, she was doing some spooky things, I think she was casting a spell." She might have just been hanging up her clothes. But if they did not like you, they went and told whoever was in charge, and you got arrested, and you did not have a trial. They called it the Salem Witch Trial. Yeah, right. The trial was, "You are a witch," and then you got burned at the stake.

We find even up into the 50s and the 60s in our country some of those laws that they enacted back there because they thought Sunday was the Sabbath, and they enacted those laws into our government. Many states carried those laws down, and it is based on the Puritans, not the good branch, but the conceited brethren branch that was responsible for many, many people being burned at the stake.

The bottom line and the truth of the matter is this, folks: in all of this, the reality is there is absolutely no connection between Sunday for you and me and the Sabbath in the Bible. There is no Christian Sabbath, just like there is no Christian diet, just like there is no Christian business.

God did not take a day of rest and give it to you and me. Sunday is not the day of rest. God did not work seven days and then rest on the seventh so we work six days and rest on the seventh and take Sunday off. Sunday in the Bible, as I said, is the first day of the week, and it sets a doctrinal issue for the nation of Israel, never for the church.

SEC: Why God Avoids Designations and Man's Tendency Towards Tradition

Saying all that, now you know where some of this stuff begins to come from. With all that being said, this is the context of Romans chapter 14. Some of God's people call Sunday the Lord's Day. Here is why we do that: because in Mark 16:2 and 9, when Christ comes out of that tomb and He rises from the dead, He rose from the dead the first day of the week. When He appeared to His disciples and to Mary in John 20:19, it was the first day of the week. In Acts 20, you are told that the New Testament church meets on the first day of the week. They took up the collection in 1 Corinthians 16:2 on the first day of the week. The Holy Spirit of God came the first day of the week in Acts 2:1. So from that, because of all the events that took place, God's people get the idea that Sunday now is some kind of holy day versus the other day, and that is where they get it from. But the truth of the matter is this: the Bible never gives that any designation. In fact, the Bible never even gives it a name; He just calls it the first day of the week. We will see why in a moment.

So people get from that that that is a holy day, and yet there is only one holy day, if you know your Bible, found in the Bible as far as the nation of Israel, a day of rest, in Genesis chapter 2, the seventh day when God set it apart, sanctified it, and made it holy, and it represents the Millennial Sabbath.

Now let me ask you a question: Do you know why God never gave any attention or any designation to the first day of the week? Did you ever stop and wonder why He did not make that a special day and a holy day? I will tell you why He did not do that: the same reason if you ever notice some things that Jesus chose not to do. Do you realize when it came to His own mother in the Bible, in John chapter 2, when she comes to Him and asks Him a question, you notice that He never calls her "Mother"? He calls her "Woman." Now, if I was growing up and my mom said something, and I looked at her and I said, "Woman," people read that and they think to themselves, "Why did Jesus call His own mother 'Woman,' and she was His mother? Why did He, He was born from her womb, why did He not call her 'Mother'?"

You know why He did not? I will tell you why He did not: because He knew the moment He would call His earthly mother "Mother," that down the line someplace, some religion would take that term and develop that concept, and before you know it, they would have Mary being made the Mother of God. They did it anyhow, but you cannot go back to the Bible and prove it. You see what I am talking about now?

I will tell you something else He refused to do: Jesus never baptized anybody. Did you ever notice that? Did you ever notice in John 4:2, it talks about that many people are baptized by Jesus, and then it says in the next verse, in parentheses, "But Jesus himself never baptized anybody." Now, why? Why would He not baptize people? Well, I will tell you one of the reasons why is because in the book of Corinthians, and we are going to look at this when we study the

church at Corinth in chapter 1 and 2, they are arguing about who baptized whom. While they are saying over here, this guy is saying, "Well, I was baptized by the Apostle Paul," and this guy says, "I was baptized by Ralph Schwartz." And the guy says, "Well, who is Ralph Schwartz?" "Well, he is just a pastor." "Well, I was baptized by the Apostle Paul." And they are tagging some significance because Paul baptized you, it makes you a better Christian than if Ralph Schwartz baptized you. His name was Ralph Schwartz, but I cannot remember what it was. Can you imagine what would happen if Jesus would have baptized people?

I will tell you another reason He did not do it: because He never wanted baptism associated with salvation. Did Jesus save people? You bet He did. The woman at the well, all kinds of people that got saved in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. You see what He wanted to do, and here is what He knew: He knew that there would be a group of people down the line who would say that baptism is essential for your salvation, and He wanted to make sure that when those people came on the scene, they could not go any place in the Bible. Because is it not strange that the same Jesus that saved people is the same Jesus that refused to baptize people? How can salvation be baptism when the very Savior refused to baptize people? You have to see things like that in your Bible.

You want another one? Oh, you are not going to like this one either. You think the greatest, you think the greatest guy in the world, who was the greatest healer in the world and did everything in the world and set the example for everybody, "Jesus is my model, Jesus is my example." Really? How come Jesus never spoke in tongues then? If He is the model, why did He not speak in tongues? Did He not have the Spirit of God? Somebody said, "Well, you do not have the Spirit of God if you do not speak in tongues." Jesus did not speak in tongues. A voice crying in the wilderness. Amen.

I will tell you something else. Ever read over there in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 about the Lord's Supper? You know what He says about the Lord's Supper? He tells you how important it is to God. He tells you what it represents and what it means, and how absolutely crucial it is for you and me to understand that when we take the Lord's Supper, what we are doing. In fact, He calls it discerning the Lord's body. And then when He tells you about this absolutely ecstatic, great doctrine in the Bible, He says, "Do it as often as you will." He did not say, "Do it every week, every month." Do you ever wonder why God never gave any license to those things? Because He knew what human nature would do with it. Human nature would take something and make a tradition out of it, and when you make a tradition out of something, you lose the value of what is really there.

Christmas and Easter, if you want two examples, just take those two. Christmas is supposed to be the birth of Christ. Come on, I guarantee you when your kids run down the steps or come out of the bedroom at 5:30, old dark 30 in the morning on Christmas morning, the last thing they are caring about is, "This is the birth of the Savior." It is the greatest commercial time of the year, and the closer we get to the coming of the Lord, the less Christ becomes associated with it. Now at school, they do not even call it Christmas break; it has got the word Christ in it. It is the winter festival. You cannot have an activity scene in a public building, but it is still Christmas. God's Son. God knew what man would do with it. He would make something it is not. He would make a tradition out of it. He would make a religious doctrine out of it. So in those things, He never,

never, never, put the emphasis on it, and that is why He never put the emphasis on Sunday being a holy day, because He knew what man would do with it. He knew what he would do with it.

Very frankly, that is why we understand that it is a doctrinal thing. That is why we do not give people an option to come on Sunday night to church so you do not have to get up on Sunday morning. We talked yesterday in Bible Institute about patterns, did we not? What you have in this particular section here about the day of the Lord, the first day, Sunday, that is the pattern the New Testament church set. I do not do it because it is a holy day; I do it because it is a pattern found in the Bible.

I will tell you something else about human nature: it is always looking to fulfill self. It is always looking to take a license to do what it wants to do over what the Bible says. Every religion on the face of this planet will build its whole doctrine around Mary, Jesus baptizing when He did not, and all of the things that go on that you cannot go to the Bible and find. Why? Because man will always, listen to me, man will always take a license out of the Bible to do what he wants to do when it is not even found in the Bible. That is just human nature.

Last week, we talked about liberty in Christ, and I guarantee you every time somebody asks a question on Thursday night, I am not so worried about it on Sunday morning because you have pretty much control over and know who is here. But on Thursday night, every time somebody asks me a question about your liberty in Christ, I get a little antsy on it because I know that when I teach it biblically and I teach really what liberty in Christ is, no matter that I put the whole thing together in the right context, people, human nature, are going to hear what you want to hear so you can walk out the door and do what you want to do and then say, "I heard it in Sunday school." That is human nature.

You remember last week I gave you two of my favorite rules: never emphasize something more than God does, and never under-emphasize something more than God does. God knows exactly what we will do. Bible Christianity is the most traditionalized setup you have ever seen. Of course, we know that in Colossians chapter 2, and we know that this is the mark of the Laodicean church, he says:

Colossians 2:8

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

We have got churches today, religion today, built around the traditions. That is why Jesus was very careful never, in anything He wrote in that Bible, to lend Himself to tradition.

When we started our church, I knew several pastors around here. One of them was an older guy that had been my friend, and he really helped us start the church. He came and spoke to us when we first started our church, and he pulled me aside afterwards and he said, "Well, you are all ready to go?" And I said, "Yep." He says, "What time is your church service on Sunday morning?" I told him 10:30. He says, "What time is your evening church service?" "Now, we do not have one." When I told him we did not have a Sunday night church service, I could see his countenance change because he had been raised all his life in a system that you have Sunday

night church service, and if you do not have a Sunday night church service, you just cannot be godly. So you imagine what happened to him when he found out we do not have a Wednesday night church service either. Because in Baptist tradition, and most of you who come out of Baptist churches, you know this is true, Sunday night and Wednesday night are the two times of the week that you have a midweek service and you have a Sunday night service.

You know why they do that? If you ask the average pastor why he does that, he will just look at you. You know why? Because he does not know why he does it either. He does it because they have done it that way all down through history, like they had in the book of Acts, Wednesday night church service. I have got news for you, in the book of Acts, when they went to church, they stayed all day. Try that one out. He says, "What time does your Sunday school start?" I said, "We do not have a Sunday school. We do it at the same time." "What? How do you build a church without Sunday school?" I do not know. Sunday school was started by a guy named Robert Raikes in 1884 or '85. What did they do before that? See how traditionalized we become? We think those things are in the Bible. Those things are not in the Bible.

New Testament Bible Christianity is set up after a pattern, and that pattern is the Lord came out the first day. It is based on a doctrinal issue: the resurrection, not the day. It is the issue. What happens is when you get so focused on the day, you forget the doctrine. That is what we do. It is exactly what we do. There is no such thing as a Christian holy day. It is built on the doctrine of the resurrection, and He simply called it the first day of the week.

Now you look at our ministry here. When I started this church, I figured that out a long time ago, and I basically come to the point where we do not have a Sunday night church service, we do not have a Wednesday night church service. I learned a long time ago that if I have two events, maybe three, in the week, I can get everything else I need. Everything else is an add-on. But the main thing that you build this around, and I have said it many, many times, is Sunday morning, Thursday night, and then for those of you who really want to get to the point where you get some things worked out, the one-on-one with me. If you really want to learn the Bible, the key is sitting down with somebody who will personally take the time to teach you.

I do not profess to know everything about the Bible, but I have had a pretty good handle on why I believe what I believe. But at the same time, I will tell you this: I do not have that because I just figured it out myself. Paul set the pattern a long time ago when he said the same things that I have committed to you, you take and commit to faithful men. When you come over one-on-one with me, I commit to you the things that Melso Baca committed to me. He committed to me the same thing somebody committed to him, and the line goes right back because that is the way you learn it.

I do not know where we got the idea that if you get saved, you come to church and you get a King James Bible, and you go to sleep every night, and one day after 10 or 15 years, the roof will roll back and pixie dust will come down, and you will just wake up spiritual and know your Bible and handle life. You have to get somebody to help you put it together, learn it, and get that thing, and then take the trials of your life, mix it with what somebody is teaching you, and helping you hand-cutting it to where you are at.

I told you a couple of weeks ago, you can go to a department store and you can buy a suit already made up for you, and you can put the top on and you get the pants, and if your waist is bigger than your shoulders, then you can go down three sizes. You can get a 38 jacket and 67 pants or whatever you need, and you can put that all together and walk out of there. But you know what? You can buy that pretty cheap. But if you really want a class suit, you know where you go? You get a tailor who takes one person at a time and makes a suit to fit your body, no matter how ugly it is. That is what you need biblically. We do not mass produce Christians here. If you are going to ever get where you are going to get, you have to be built one person at a time. Most pastors are just not willing to do that. They are in the mass production like they are in mass evangelism, and of course, that just does not work.

I built my ministry around that, based on a model of the first day of the week. I do that the same way I use a King James Bible. It was the pattern set down by the New Testament church. I tell you right now, you give me Sunday morning, Thursday night, and give me one-on-one with you, and I will get you cooking on the Word of God so fast you will not know what hits you. Then if you want a deeper thing, if you want to go beyond that, if you want to make your calling sure and you get everything and you really want a piece of this thing, then you have Bible Institute, you have Bible Basics, you have everything else you need to help put it together. But it is one person at a time. That is the system. God knew we would focus on the day and lose the whole event because that is what Christians do. They come to church because they are supposed to be here, and they do not even know why they are here.

With regards to the issue of the day here in Romans 14:5-6, here is the bottom line: if you want to call Sunday the Lord's Day, it is okay. If you want to call every day the Lord's Day, that is okay. If you want to call them all alike and none of them special, that is okay. It is not an issue to fight over. I am a Bible believer, I somewhat know my Bible, and I know from a biblical doctrinal standpoint, when you find "the day," "the Lord's day," "that day," it is never referring to Sunday. It is always referring to the second coming of Christ. I know that. I am not threatened by somebody saying, "Well, thank you for being in church on the Lord's Day." I do not care about that. I understand, I know what I believe. I am not going to get confused in it, and if somebody wants to go through their life looking at it that way, that is what he said, was it not? "Let every man be persuaded in his own mind." Not an issue to fight over. I am not going to church you for it. We are not going to, you are not going to have a problem with me in any way, shape, or form, or anybody else should.

But you need to understand from a Bible standpoint, your Bible is built around two days. There are two special days in your Bible, and those are the only two days you need to worry about.

1.) The first day is the Day of Christ, or sometimes it is called the Day of Jesus Christ. You know what that day is? That is the day of the Rapture.

2.) The second one is the Day of the Lord. You know what that is? That is the Second Coming of Christ.

Those are the only two holy days found in your Bible, and one of them has to do with you and me as a child of God being raptured out of this mess. The other one has to do with Christ coming back for the nation of Israel, and your whole Bible is built around those two days, just like that. I

know that. So when somebody gets up and says, "Well, this is a great day that the Lord has given us, this is the Lord's Day," I just say, "Amen, praise the Lord," and maybe it will be the real day that I am looking for.

Let me show you how ridiculous people can be. Take your Bibles for a minute and turn over to Revelation chapter 1. I am going to show you this now. If you ever get a commentary on Revelation, 99.999 percent of them will tell you what I am going to show you here. This is crazy. My goal today is not to give you a breakdown outline of the book of Revelation, but you are going to get the entry level to it in just a second. Obviously, the book of Revelation is probably one of the hardest books that people think there is in the Bible. Personally, I think it is the easiest book in the Bible. If you want a hard book in the Bible, it is Romans. But everybody looks at Revelation, and because it is future, because there is a lot of stuff that looks allegorical, because there is a lot of stuff that looks like it is symbolism, you feel you have to have some kind of key to figure out all the symbolism. So it is a great mystery book, and they give it all kinds of names other than the book of Revelation. They call it "the Apocalypse." Wow, that is impressive. What does that mean? I have not got a clue what it means, but it sounds really neat.

Now look at Revelation 1:10, and I will tell you what most commentaries tell you. What I am about to give you is the key to your understanding the book of Revelation, the key to understand the Revelation, just two verses, because that is how simple God made it. But let me show you how people get messed up when they do not know their Bible, and this day thing becomes something that they do not put in the right context. Again, if we go out to eat this afternoon and you say, "Boy, this is a great Lord's Day today," I am going to say, "Amen, can you pass the Tabasco sauce?" I mean, I am with you, man, I am with you. But you need to understand.

Revelation 1:10

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet:

Every commentator you are going to find or read on Revelation is going to tell you that John saw this thing on Sunday, the first day of the week. That is what he is going to tell you. Of course, if you take that position, you are never going to figure out the book of Revelation. Now the second verse you need is found in the same chapter. Look at Revelation 1:19:

Revelation 1:19

Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

Those two verses are the key to the book of Revelation. But if you do not understand what he is talking about when he says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," and you think it is Sunday, well, you are going to have some tough times. Here is the key: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." You want an outline of the book of Revelation? You want to go home and understand it just like that as far as the outline of it? Here it is, two verses: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." The Lord's Day right here, it is the Second Coming of Christ. Now John is down here in 90 AD, and what God does is He picks him up in the Spirit, whisks him forward 2000 plus years, and puts him with the Lord's Day, Second Coming. When he is at the Second Coming, Revelation

1:19, he says, "Now write, but write in three tenses, John." It is these three tenses that you understand to break down the book of Revelation.

He is at the Day, the Lord's Day. He was in the Spirit. God took him from 90 AD, brought him up, and put him on the Second Coming of Christ, right where it takes place. Then He says, "Write three things:"

- 1.) Write what thou hast seen. That would be the Tribulation, the Rapture, and the Church Age.
- 2.) The things that are. That would be the Second Coming.
- 3.) The things which shall be. That will be the Millennium and Eternity.

So when you are reading the book of Revelation, you do not read it from John in 90 AD trying to figure out what all this stuff is from 90 AD. You have got to understand that he is picked up and taken to the Second Coming of Christ, and he writes in a past, present, and a future. But the present when he writes is the Lord's Day. If you do not understand that, you are not going to figure Revelation out.

We had a guy here a couple of weeks ago on Thursday night Bible study, some of you guys were talking to him. He wanted to make the Revelation book written in 60 AD, 66 AD, and he was adamant that the book of Revelation was written in 60 AD, 66 AD, and he was adamant that it was not written in 90 AD. You know why he is adamant that it was not written in 90 AD and has to have it written in 66 AD? Because if he has it written in 66 AD, then he can say all the destruction in Revelation is Titus coming down in 70 AD destroying Jerusalem. Because he did not do that till 70 AD, so he is 66, he is still four years out, and he just takes it that way through history and he misses the whole book. The whole book has nothing to do with Titus coming down and destroying anything. The book has to do with the Second Coming of Christ and John looking back and seeing the Tribulation Period, the Rapture, and the Church Age, and then he sees the Second Coming, and then he sees the Millennium and Eternity. That is the perspective you have got to break down the book, all built around the Lord's Day.

There are no holy days for you and for me. Go back to Colossians chapter 2, and we talked about this a couple of weeks ago, but again, it needs to come in here. Look at Colossians 2:11. These are why you do not fight with younger Christians over these things. If I have somebody coming in here and you are just a young Christian, or maybe you have been saved for a lot of years but you have been in a church where you got no Bible training and nobody worked with you, or you just got saved and you think Sunday is the Lord's Day, you know what that is? Absolutely wonderful for me, because you know why? Because if you take advantage of Sunday morning, Thursday night, and a one-on-one, and you get the disciple to begin to grow, you will figure it out. You will figure it out.

Colossians 2:11-17

In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

Because we are in the New Testament, let no man judge you by what you eat or what you drink, in any holy days, no respect to any holy day, any Sabbath day, because there are none in a New Testament Christian. There is absolutely no day or holy day for a Bible-based child of God to believe in if you understand your Bible. There are only two days in that Bible for you and me: one of them is the Day of Jesus Christ when I get raptured out of here, and the other one is the day He comes back at the Second Coming. But it does not bother me if somebody wants to call today the Lord's Day. I could care less. As much as if you have a Christian Christmas tree in your house and an Easter egg hunt in your backyard, it is not a doctrinal issue, and as long as you understand it.

A number of years ago, there was a guy who was very prevalent in Christian circles, and he was prevalent in the legalistic Christian circle, and you do not hear much about him anymore, but his name was Bill Gothard. I knew Bill Gothard personally; I talked to him on several occasions. So what I am saying here, I am not speaking out of school. I knew him, I talked with him, and I had been at several of his seminars, and they used to do all of those things. There was some good stuff in it, but he is one of these kind of guys that got hooked on the fact that there was a Christian diet. He preached from his big thing was sexual sins. That was a big stick. He even said one time, "If you eat red meat," he says, "it will have you be sexual, you will be sexual." Whatever it was, it is not true. I ate raw hamburger all week long, did not do a thing for me. But his deal was that there was a Christian diet you had to eat, and if you ate raw meat or meat with blood in it, that somehow that raw blood got into your blood, and you became, oh, you know where it goes. If you eat raw meat with blood in it, and you eat that, ingest it, the Bible says back in the Old Testament that you do not eat blood. Remember that? So what happens is you eat the meat with blood in it, and it is the blood of an animal, and you digest it, you turn into an animal.

He is the same guy about three years later was getting up and preaching that Cabbage Patch dolls, remember those Cabbage Patch dolls, were made in a place that were prayed over by witches. Remember when you bought your Cabbage Patch, they came with a name, and those names were given by witches and put in a little box. So when you gave your kid a Cabbage Patch doll, you gave them something that was already demon possessed. That is what he taught. You are laughing, but you would be surprised at God's people that had crusades against Cabbage

Patch dolls. I am not kidding. There were Baptist churches and pastors got onto that and preached that, and it was the stupidest thing you ever saw in your life.

Yet those same guys that would preach on Cabbage Patch and red meat eating, making you a sexual Tyrannosaurus Rex or whatever it is, and all of those things, were the same guys that every day on their calendars and their little notebooks, they would look at Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Did you ever notice that Jesus does not call them Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday? He calls them the first day of the week, the second day of the week, the third day of the week. You know why? Because Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday were the names of the pagan Roman gods that they named the days after. You see, he did not want your kid to have a Cabbage Patch, but on his planner, he let his weeks and his days go by the Greek Roman gods. Saturday is Saturn, Friday is Freya, the god of sex. Every one of those, it is the same way.

Did you notice that? You have to get this. You know that God never calls it January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December? He never does that. Did you ever notice that? He has His own name for the months. The names for our months that we use in our calendar again are the pagan Roman gods that they built their feasts around and the time of years around. Now that is okay. You do not see me scratching up my calendar. You do not see me finding a biblical calendar. You know why? I do not care. They mean nothing to me. Now, I do not believe for a heartbeat that they put demon-possessed names in Cabbage Patch dolls. But you know what? So what if they did? "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." I am not worried about a Cabbage Patch doll when you are probably working with people in the office that are a thousand times more demon-possessed than a Cabbage Patch doll. I have got some in the front row here I am worried about, and I am right here only six feet from them.

My point is this, and it is a great truth, and this leads us to the next section: God looks at the world one way, does He not? Even down to the months of the year and the days of the week, and we look at it from another way. That is a great truth. Do you think that God looks at the months differently than we do and names them differently, and He will not even use the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, but gives them a numerical number? Do you think if He looks at that differently, He does not look at the things we do in our life differently? I do not know if you can grasp that today or not. I hope you can. It is an incredible concept. It is an incredible concept. But I am telling you, my friend, the thing that you have got to understand is that God looks at things one way, differently than you and I do.

SEC: The Principle: No Man Liveth to Himself

All right, let us move on to the next verse down through here. We have pretty much got the day system set up, and you pretty much understand that now. Let me show you a great verse here. I told you, I do not know if it was last week or the week before, that this great chapter, chapter 14, was built around four or five great biblical principles. I want to look at the first one here in this next verse, and then we are going to talk about another one next week and come right on through and build the rest of the chapter around it, just like what we have done. These great principles are

really the whole concept of our liberty in Christ, and our understanding of it in light of being a mature Christian is absolutely essential.

Look at Romans 14:7:

Romans 14:7

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

This verse, obviously in the context here, is dealing with the aspect of eating and drinking and holy days. But I want to tell you something, this verse right here should hit every one of us right between the eyeballs. It is simply this: remember I told you God looks at things one way, we look at them another way. Well, the great principle here is this: somebody is always watching our lives. If you are saved here this morning, somebody is watching your life. Your life is not your own. The Bible told you that you are bought with a price.

It is a simple fact, and most people never understand this: people do not listen to what you say. Some of you talk about God and how much you love God, and you carry your Bibles, and you do everything in the world, and you are here Sunday morning, Thursday night, and come to everything in the world. You know what? Your own personal life is a disaster. Your kids see it, your friends see it. You just cannot see it. You think there is a set of rules for you and there is a set of rules for everybody else. People do not listen to what you say; they simply watch how you live your life.

I heard years ago, and this was a story I have never gotten over, and it was one of those old preachers, and he said this, and I never would have ever thought of that in this way. But he told the story of the denial of Peter in Matthew chapter 26. You know in that story what happens? Peter, and I will tell you, when you study the apostles, I am not kidding you, if you want to find yourself and where you are at with God, study the lives of the 12 apostles. But in that 12, you know as well as I do, there were three that are called the inner three, and they are everywhere with the Lord. Their names are Peter, James, and John. To study those three men are an absolute gold mine of information about you and my relationship with God and what it should be.

Peter is an incredible story. Peter is somebody who is always writing checks with his mouth that his body cannot cash, and he is always shooting his mouth off. He has the best of intentions and the best motive. He is a perfect example of somebody who has a zeal but not according to knowledge. I look at him and I see so many of God's people over my years, even myself in younger years of my life. But to study those three men, Peter, James, and John, is a great unknown study of the Bible.

But you know the story here. They have taken the Lord Jesus Christ. He is before Pilate. James has taken off. All the 12 have gone. John is on the inside watching what is going on. He is the closest one to it. But Peter, Peter will not go in. Peter is standing by the fire, and I have always thought that was interesting. He is standing there by the fire warming himself. The Bible says there that a damsel comes up to him, and she says, "Are you not one of the 12?" And Peter, warming the fire, says, "No, I am not." A few moments later, another little maid, your Bible says, comes up and says, "You are Peter, are you not? You were with him." This time the Bible says

that he says, "No," with an oath. You know what that means? He says, "No, by God, I am not. I swear to you by heaven, I do not know this guy. By all the saints, I am not with this guy." She goes away.

Then the Bible says, "Then that stood by." You see, somebody was watching his life, and he did not even know it. Here it is, the darkest hour of his life. Here it is, the hardest time when everything he knows, he has known for the last three years, is now cascading and crashing down around his ears. The Bible says the first little gal came, "No, I am not." The second little gal came, and he swears by an oath, and he said, "By God, I do not know this guy." Yet there are others standing over there, and they are saying, "Boy, he looks like one of them to me." Somebody is always watching your life. So the next group comes over, and they say this, "Hey, you must be Peter, your speech doth betray you." You see, that is what ought to betray you of not being part of the world. They watched his life. They saw who he was. They heard what he had said. And now when he denies it with his body by saying, "I do not know him," they come to him and face him, and they say, "Hey, look, you must be one of his, your speech betrays you." So you know what he does to make the final thing work? He curses. He says, "Look, I do not know the blankety-blank son of a blank, and I am tired of you blankety-blank people coming up and asking me. I am not with the blankety-blank guy that you say I am with." At that point, notice, they never come back again.

What if, this is what the old preacher preached on, what if they were coming to him to find out about Christ? There is somebody always watching your life. What if somebody comes to you at work and does not ask you right out, but they come to you because deep down in their heart they have heard that you are a Christian? They saw your Bible on your desk. And now because they have a deepness in their heart and they think you might have some answers, they simply come to you under a pretense of, "Could I use this?" or "Could I use that?" hoping that they might get an entry into your world to ask you about the Savior that they think that you know. And what do they get? Same thing these two little gals and this group of guys got from Peter: "Your speech doth betray you." What you say does not line up with the way you live.

I am telling you, it is a simple fact. You hear me say it to you folks all the time: look around, look behind, and look ahead. There is somebody always watching your life. For you understanding your liberty in Christ, this is one of the greatest verses in the Bible that you will find: "No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." The importance of grasping the concept of the verses that I gave you over the last couple of weeks:

- * Galatians 5:13: That you do not use your liberty for an occasion of the flesh.
- * 1 Peter 2:16: That using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness.
- * 1 Corinthians 6:12: That all things are lawful, sure they are, but not all things are expedient.
- * 1 Corinthians 10:23: That all things are lawful, but not all things edify. And then he says that I will not be brought under the power of any.

SEC: Liberty, Stumbling Blocks, and the Law of Sowing and Reaping

I have never preached on liberty in Christ that I do not have somebody come to me, and over the last week, since last week, they were good questions, and they were not malicious in any way,

shape, or form. I want you to understand that. One of them heard it on the tape already and called me and had a question, and they live all the way out in Colorado someplace, and they called me and asked me. Then I have had a couple of other people ask me, and they asked really good questions. But it always happens, and I knew they would, and I did not get into this last week because I wanted to finish it up this week, and I wanted to see how things went.

Here was the question, and I will just throw this one out. It could be anything, but this is what I got, and I get this all the time. Somebody said, "Okay, I have liberty, and you said, Bob, I heard on the tape, you said that all things are lawful, not all things are expedient, and it is one of those things where, if all things are lawful and I can do whatever I want to do, and all things be done in moderation." And here was the question: "Why can't I just enjoy a beer every once in a while?" That is a legitimate question. I get that all the time. I think God's people are the biggest beer drinkers in the world. I mean, that is the only thing they ever ask me.

Now let me ask you a question. You are a child of God here this morning. Let us talk about it. Let us talk about your liberty in Christ and see this thing for how it is. What is wrong with having a beer? What is wrong with having some kind of margarita, wine cooler, whatever you have? I do not know what people have or whatever, not necessarily you. The answer is really simple, and this is where I get into trouble when preaching liberty because people will take what you say and they will use it as a license to do what they want to do. You will not hear everything I say; you will just hear what you want to hear. Happens all the time.

What is wrong with it? Do you want to know what is wrong with you as a child of God having a beer from the Bible? Here it comes: not one cotton-picking thing. And there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour. I am just being honest now. You know what? I know full well by saying what I am just saying that I just telegraphed to some of you a license to go do what you want to do. But do not run out and get your six-pack before you hear the rest of the message.

I will tell you the truth, when I was in the army, and we had bolts that we could not get that were rusted shut on something, you know what we used to get them open with? Coca-Cola. I cannot imagine what Coke does to your insides. I do know what it does to bolts, and I still drink it. But I want to be honest with you this morning. Let us just put it right across the plate. I hear it come, just call me a pitcher. Coke is probably 10,000 times worse for you than one beer. Ready to leave the church yet? Well, let us just go have a drink and talk about it.

With that being said, let me ask you a question for some of you that think that way. I had a guy come into my office years ago, and he was a nice kid, and he was not a smart aleck, and he legitimately had a question about the same thing because I think it came up in one of our Monday night Bible studies back then. He came over and he sat down, and he said, "I want you to know," he said, "I really enjoy this, and I am saved, I am on my way to heaven, I am really learning the Bible." But he said, "I want you to know," he says, "I do not indulge in it, I am certainly not a drunk, but he says, I want you to know that I like a beer every once in a while." And he just said, "I just wanted you to know that since I am going to come to your Bible study and probably join your church." And I said, "Oh, that is okay, I like one every once in a while

too." I should have seen his face immediately. He says to me, "You mean you drink one every once in a while?" I said, "Sure, man. Maybe you will have just one before we leave here tonight because you know what? We can do that."

He thought it was appalling that I, and I said, "Well, what is wrong with me having one?" He says, "Well, you are a preacher." I said, "No, we are both preachers. Not only are we both preachers, but we are both missionaries, and not only both missionaries, we are both ambassadors." Now you know what your problem is? You have got one set of rules for you and one set of rules for me. But good for the goose, it is good for the gander. I do not know if you are the goose or the gander, but let us do it. Immediately, he came to the point where he thought to himself that it was okay for him, but if you are a preacher or a pastor, that it was wrong. See, that comes down to the idea that if you are here this morning and you are saved, you think I am a preacher and you are not. That is your basic fundamental problem. Now, I may be the pastor and you are not, but if you are saved here this morning, you should be a preacher, and you should be a missionary to wherever you work, and you need to be an ambassador wherever you go. You and I, no matter whether you are a pastor or a Christian or whatever, we are both living sacrifices.

Now you have the liberty to do it, and there is no law in the Bible against it. But here is the deal: having a Coke does not associate you with the same thing that a beer does in people's eyes. Remember what I said last week? All things are lawful, but not all things are expedient. Why? Because not everything is edifying. Remember it said, "Refrain from all appearances of evil." Remember it said, "Let not your good be evil spoken of." Very frankly today, I do not drink a beer, even though I know I could, because I know what it associates with. How many of you would come back to church next Sunday if you walked in the restaurant and I was putting down a tall one? Some of you probably would. But the bottom line is simply this: in your mind, it would bother you, if it would not bother most of you. I just say, "How do you do it?" With me, I just have to smell it, and I would be on the floor. I mean, I never drank in my life. This is the only thing I am talking about. I do not know what I am talking about.

Here is the problem: try to witness to your unsaved friends. They will throw it right back in your face. Unsaved people know what is right and wrong. What do God's people do? I know what I will do. I will go ahead and put you with a guy who is an alcoholic, and you can help him get through his and help him get back, just to have one every once in a while. Try that one on for size. You see, we cannot be like Peter. We cannot be a stumbling block. We just simply cannot.

Now I know what you are saying, I know where it goes because I know how human nature goes. "Well, I will just do it at home." That is a great idea, where nobody knows. Really? What about your kids? Or do you not care about them either? Now look, folks, I am going to say something to you here. I am only going to say it one time, and you better get what I am saying. I know some of you do not like it, and some of you will not like it, but I do not know what to tell you. I have an obligation to tell you the truth. Why? I feel like Jesus sometimes, or Paul sometimes, when he said to them, "Why am I your enemy because I told you the truth?"

Now in the Bible, there are some automatic laws, the laws of life. I know we are not under the Old Testament laws, but there are universal laws the world runs by, just like the law of gravity. One of those laws is the law of sowing and reaping. In Galatians 6:7, it simply says:

Galatians 6:7

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

We reap what we sow in our personal lives, with our families, our children, our husbands, our wives. It says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." What do you mean, "Be not deceived"? Do not deceive yourself that you can say, "I am a Christian," and do whatever you want to do because you have liberty, and not pay a price tag for it. Boy, many, many times that price tag is hard to pay. I mean, we like to sleep around, drink around, sleep around at home or wherever, and then we think our children do not see. Just think of your children as this: think of your children as video recorders, video recorders that are running 24/7. They are videoing in their little minds everything they see you do, everything they hear you say, everything they see when you do not think they do.

Now you know what the Old Testament counterpart is to that, Galatians 6:7? It is in Exodus 20:5, and it simply says this:

Exodus 20:5

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

It said the fathers. Hello. We pass our sins onto our children, and then the law of human collapse comes in and it sets in, and then your children have the same problems, but they have them in a greater manifold than you had them because things spiral down, not up. Some of you are in this church, and you came in from families where they were not saved, they were not in the Bible, they did everything, and you got caught up into it. You now, by the grace of God, have the chance to break that cycle. You have the chance to give your children the greatest gift you could ever give them, and their grandchildren, and their grandchildren, and that is the guarantee of a godly generation down the line. But somebody has to clear up a spot and break the chain. He says, "I will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." And then you will wonder why you have kids, probably your kids. You will wonder why they do the same things that you do, only in excess.

I had a guy one time years ago that was an alcoholic, and I tried to work with that guy and work with him, and I said, "You know what? How did you ever get into this mess?" I did not expect he was going to give me the story. He told me, he says, "When I grew up, my dad worked hard, he was a good man." And he said, "Every night before my dad went to bed, he had one or two bottles of beer when he watched the ball game or what he did or whatever he watched." And he said, "He sat there in his easy chair and he drank two beers and he went to bed." He says, "You know how I got hooked on booze? After my mom and dad went to bed, I snuck back down and I drained the suds out of his bottle at night." "Be not deceived." Yeah, you can do it. You can do it

today. You have a Bible, you have church, you have the Holy Spirit of God, you have everything you need to break that generational cycle. You better study generations in the Bible.

You have the choice to train up a child in the way he will go, or you have a train up a child and away he will go. The Bible says, "As arrows are in the hands of a mighty man," and hit your target, "so are children of the youth." You launch your children into life, to heaven or hell, wherever they go, whatever they do, simply based on what you do in your life. While you are getting it, get this: what I am about to tell you is the simple bottom line. God has a plan, He has a model, He has a pattern. He has a pattern for your children, He has a pattern for new Christians. Yeah, I know you have liberty, you can do whatever you want to do. But you realize there is something in this life that just is not about you. You realize there is always somebody watching your life. They may go to heaven or hell.

You know what? We all do stupid things. We all make mistakes. Everybody does. I do, you do. We do some boneheaded thing. But my God, people do not just go out to do it, some in your nose at the authority so you can do what you want to do with your liberty. I give you a new Christian to deal with, somebody to just get saved. They know nothing about God. They know nothing about God. They know nothing about the Bible. Do you not understand what I am saying? They do not know anything about God. They do not know anything about how to get to God. When I put you in their world to disciple them or work with them or help them, do you know who God is in their life? It is you. You are what they see. You are the pattern by which they formulate their mind concept of God. You are a child of God. They are looking at one of God's children who had a mirror image of their Father, and that is how they learn about God. They learn it by what you say, they learn it by what you do. In time, if you are doing your job, you will turn them over and give them directly to God that they can build their own relationship, that they do not have to look at you anymore.

That is what I do with you in the Bible. You come in, you do not know nothing about the Bible. You are so stupid, you do not even know anything, you do not even suspect anything. So I teach you the Bible, I give you everything you know. But do I allow you to stay that way? No. I am like a little mother eagle pushing you out on the limb as your wings get clipped and get you out a little farther because you have got to fly someday. You cannot stay in the nest now. So I prod you along a little bit like a mother eagle nudging with her nose to get you out on the limb. And like that little baby eagle, it is high, you are in a mountain, it is scary. And one of these days, she just boots you off, and you start to fall. But then you open up your wings and your arms, and then pretty soon you catch the air and you float and you learn to fly. That is why God likens Himself to Israel in Deuteronomy 32, the mother eagle who spreadeth her wings over her young. That is what a pastor's job is. When you become part of this ministry and disciple somebody, that is your job. That young Christian will only ever see God, and their first impression of God will be the person. There is an absolute tremendous, tremendous, tremendous responsibility that you have in nurturing somebody in the Word of God.

We all make mistakes. We are going to do dumb things. But my friend, just going out and making them because you can, at the expense of another younger Christian. I know I have standards for people, and I know that people are imperfect. I hear it all the time. Everybody likes

to point out everybody else's problems. I have got a list of them. Everybody give me about everybody else. We all have issues, and I am willing to deal with that. I understand we are human, we all make mistakes, we are all made of clay. But that does not take away from the fact that we are supposed, as God's people, to be a living sacrifice. We are supposed to grow up with His mind. We are supposed to use the Bible principles and make them life principles and issues of life for other people. I just do not want them to see God with a cigarette in His hand. I just do not want them to see God with a beer in His hand. Okay, get mad at me. I just do not want a young Christian to look at some gal or some guy who are living together or having sex together outside of marriage and just saying, "Well, that is okay because they have got to be Christian." No, it has got to be better than that. We think we hide it, but our kids are smarter than we ever thought about being.

SEC: God's Pattern for Families

God has got a pattern, and that first pattern is for young Christians. What they see in God and understand about God is what they see in you that work with them. You know what? I have heard this: most people in churches, they do not want a perfect pastor because there is none, and I am far from perfect. They do not want a perfect pastor; they just want a real one. That is what most people want with people that work with them. They do not want somebody perfect; they just want somebody that is real.

Now the second thing in God's method is your children. Boy, what a pattern God does, child, that little child into a young adult of adolescence years. You know what? It is the same thing, only in a more graphic way. A little child growing up knows absolutely nothing about God. Do you ever stop and think of this? Do you ever see this past yourself? Do you ever just get yourself out of the way and what you want, your fleshly desire? Do you ever just put them out of the way and see what God really wants and the impact your life has because there is somebody always watching your life? You raise that little kid, you give birth to it, you bring it into this world, and that little guy grows up, and that little girl grows up, and they become a baby, and they look at you, and you nourish it, and you feed it, and you clothe it. You know what? It comes to the point where that little baby growing up someday, it is going to have to be saved. That little baby girl is going to grow up to an adult girl. That little baby boy is going to grow up to an adult guy. And someday, they are going to come to the point where they are going to have to make their choice between heaven and hell. You might be able to change their diaper. You might be able to feed them. You might be able to protect them. You might be able to clothe them. You might be able to keep the bullies away from them. But you will not make that decision for them.

But then yet you do. As arrows are in the hands of a mighty man, so are our children of the youth. They grow up. All they know of God is you. They do not know how to read the Bible. It takes mom and dad introducing them to Jesus. You know how mom and dad introduce them to Jesus? They see God in you, mom and dad.

Did you ever notice what Jesus did? It is the pattern. I do not really care if you like it or not. It is the pattern. Why did He give a husband and wife? Why does it not work for two lesbians to raise a kid? Why does it not work for two gay guys to raise a kid? Why was the model and the pattern

a husband and a wife? Obviously, a husband and wife have to have a husband and wife to have a child in the first place. But what about after that? What is God's pattern? What is the plan? Is there more to that? Do you actually think that God just puts you down here so you could have kids and have sex and enjoy sex without feeling guilty about it? I do not know why He would do that. Most of you have sex outside of marriage and you still feel good about it. But all of those things that He puts together and puts into your life and then lets those girls go and just stand back and say, "Okay, keep populating the earth." No, no, there is a pattern. You raise corn. You raise rabbits. You raise Labradors. You raise German Shepherds. But you train children. Right now your children, every one of them, are in a training process watching your life. Oh, boy. Oh, boy. And you think they do not see? They think you do not hear? You think they do not know? Those little video cameras are running 24/7. And you are all they ever see of God.

That is why so many kids grow up. I never kid, makes mistakes. There are no perfect kids. I am talking about the kids that just grow up and have no concept of God. I am talking about the kids that grow up and just go to hell in a handbasket because all they ever see of God and what God intended for them to see was mom and dad, and seeing God in mom and dad. Why do you wonder why it is a mom and a dad? I will tell you why. Ephesians 5 says the dad is supposed to be Christ. It says the woman is supposed to be the church. Now your job in time, is it not, is to get your daughter and your son to grow up, accept Christ as their own personal Savior, and then getting involved in a relationship in a church.

Well, you know what? God set the pattern for the time they were a baby, for the time they were born. People talk about baby dedication. Somebody asked me, "Why do you not have a baby dedication here?" We probably have them all the time. You just miss them. "Well, I have been here every Sunday." Yeah, it is because there is a pattern to it. Every baby in the Bible that was dedicated to God, the pattern, P-A-T-T-E-R-N, pattern. The pattern in the Bible is they are dedicated before they are born, not after they are born. You know why we do it after? Because that is tradition. You know why we do not do it before? Because that is Bible.

Dad is supposed to be Christ. Mom is supposed to be the church. Your kids should grow up in your marriage understanding what the relationship is between Christ and the church by watching the relationship between mom and dad. Boy, how about that for a great lesson, huh? Growing up in a thing where mom is cussing and screaming and dad is cussing and screaming and fighting and breaking things and throwing things and threatening divorce and getting upset and calling each other stupid names I could not even repeat today. That is how kids grow up today with a warped concept of Christ and the church. And then we wonder why they have struggles when they grow up. God's people, get a clue. Your liberty, yes, your liberty, and you can do whatever you want. But brother, be not deceived. God is not mocked. When you do not understand the patterns of your family and your life and everything that goes on, then God comes down and you reap what you sow. But the problem is God holds the iniquity of the fathers. Fathers, fathers, fathers, fathers, because you are supposed to be the spiritual leader. Your kids pay a tag for it. Kids always pay a tag for it. Kids always pay a price.

You are saved here today, most of you. So you think you can do what you want to do. Live your life, have all the beer you want, smoke what you want, do what you want, go where you want.

You are saved, you are going to heaven. But your kid does not have that in the barn yet. And they grow up, and you get to go to heaven, and they get to die and go to hell. That is a great deal. That is a great deal. That wife and that husband is a picture of Christ in the church. That relationship, when it is the right relationship, will bring them to the point where they will understand exactly what they have got to get into, and you can lead them right into the right relationship with Christ and win them to Christ based on what? 10, 12, 13 years of them seeing mom and dad in a warm, loving, fuzzy relationship that breeds security. They never hear any bickering. They never see any fighting. They never see any knockdown drag-outs. They do not hear cussing with each other.

I will tell you what, I grew up, and I know most of you have been in situations like this, I grew up, and every Christmas in my life, every Christmas I can remember, I was scared to death my mom and dad were going to get a divorce. They fought over the stupidest things in this world. You know what it usually was? Getting a Christmas tree straight. I remember one time, as a little kid, my mom hit my dad over the head with a chair, broke the chair. My dad went down in the garage and sat in his car. I worried all day that something was wrong with him. I wanted to go down, but I was afraid because of anger. There is not mine. I remember one time they got in a fight one time so bad that my dad took my mom's glasses and busted them up and threw them out because she could not see squat without glasses. And here I am, just a little guy about that big. This sounds stupid what I am about to tell you, and it is ridiculous, but this is where little guys think. I wanted my mom to see. So I had out of my chemistry set and out of my little erector set, I had two little magnifying glasses. I took two of them and taped them together, and I put little handles on them, and I said, "Here, Mom, here are some glasses for you." Then when she put them on, she looked like she was looking through two Coke bottles. That did not work either.

That is not my point. My point is, now I know that, I know that, there is no, let me tell you something folks, there is no knight in shining armor and fairy tales about marriage. Every marriage struggles. You come over to my house sometime, you want to see it. If I get the bedroom cleaned up, I will show you a big hole in the door in the bathroom. I put that hole in there probably, what was it, Thursday or Friday? I put that hole in there probably 35 years ago. In one of my mad rages, I do not even know what it was about. I kicked that door so hard, and I put a hole in it. My little girls were standing right there and watched it. I never replaced that door. I always left that door on. You go to that hole in that door. You know why I never replaced that door? Because I do not go in that room, I do not look at that, and I do not walk into that bathroom, I do not walk into that bedroom. I do not see that hole in that door, and I do not remember how stupid I was on that day.

Everybody blows it. You know what I did? When I came to my senses, I went and got my kids down, and I sat down, and I said, "You know what, Dad was wrong. I never should have done that. I lost my temper. I should not have done that. I kicked the door. That is a stupid thing. I never, never, never, never should have done that, and I want you to know I will never do it again." And I have not done it again. I never replaced eight or nine windows since that point, but never the door again. Come on. You know what I am talking about. Some of you, you have the Bible, you have this church, you have the Holy Spirit of God, you have me as your pastor, you

have other people in your life, and yet your little children grow up in World War III. They hear the bickering and the fighting and the name-calling, all because we will not do what the Bible says because we are so selfish.

Let me tell you something, folks. If you think the devil will miss that opportunity with your kid while you are doing what you want to do, you do not think he will not come in the back door and give those kids and grab those kids? You are nuts. "Be not deceived. God is not mocked." You will visit that iniquity to the third and fourth generation until somebody down the line decides to break it. I can have a hundred thousand King James Bibles and 60 million principles and 3,000 people to help you, but if you do not clear off a spot and say, "I am going to change, and I am going to do what the Bible says, and I am going to put my passion, my pride, everything aside, and I am going to do what the Bible says." And then if you do not, five, ten years down the line, or you get in another goofy marriage, and you are getting married, and you get a divorce, and then you walk around and scratch your head and say, "I wonder what happened?" Nobody is perfect.

I will tell you one last thing, and then I am finished. People not only watch what you go through when you go through adversity, somebody is always watching your life. They do not listen to what you say about your relationship. They watch how you live when all goes against you. When everything falls apart, Omel Sabaka used to say, and I have never forgotten, he used to say, "You know what? If your Christianity is not contagious, then your Christianity is contaminated." Our Christianity ought to be contagious to the people that are around you. You know why we have had so many people saved in this last couple of months since the first of the year when you guys really took that New Year's Eve thing seriously? You know why it is? It is because people took it serious about the fact that what they had, they had to give to somebody else. It is just that simple.

I told you the story, and I end with this. I told you the story how years ago I heard a preacher tell the story about, "What do you get when you squeeze a lemon?" Everybody says, "Well, when you squeeze a lemon, you get lemon juice." He said, "Well, you would think that, would you not?" The reality is, whatever you squeeze, when you squeeze a lemon, what is really on the inside comes out. He told the story how, and this is down south someplace, that somebody was going in, this has been years ago, and injecting poison in the lemons in a grocery store, which would be pretty easy to do. People were buying the lemons, coming home and squeezing the lemons and making lemonade, drinking it and dying. And he said, "You know what?" He said, "They were buying it because when they squeezed the lemons, you would just think that lemon juice came out. But in reality, there was something else in there, and that is really what came out." And then he asked the question, "What do you get when you squeeze a Christian?" Well, when you squeeze a Christian, you would think you would get one thing. But the truth of the matter is, when you, me, when we are squeezed, you know what the bottom line is? Whatever is on the inside comes out.

People ought to look at your life and see you going through the things you go through. We are supposed to have the Bible, we are supposed to have the hope, we are supposed to have everything that God has for us. We are supposed to have everything that we could ever want in our life and have the victory in everything that we do. I know we are not perfect, and I know we

make mistakes, and we fall down sometimes. But the bottom line is, we are supposed to have the victory, and that is what people look for. People do not care about your Christianity when everything is going good, when you have got a raise at work, when you have got a new car, or you won this, or you got that, or you found this, or somebody gave you this. They look at you when your world folds up like a broken accordion around your neck, and nobody is around you. That is when they watch if what you really have is really real. Many times the adversity that we go through, God puts in our lives simply because there is somebody else watching us, because I am going to tell you one last time, "No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."

Yeah, we have liberty. Yeah, there are lots of things I could do, but I will not do lots of things simply because there is somebody always watching my life. I have got enough problems with Bob Alexander the way I am without just going out and looking for things to be stumbling blocks for people. That is why Paul does this chapter. He takes two basic things, the eating and he takes the days, but you can see how he ties this thing together. The first great principle we have looked at, there are four more in here we are going to talk about. We will talk about one next week. But the one we took today is simply this, and you go out of here and you remember this in your liberty: yeah, you have got a right to do whatever you want to do, and all things in moderation, and there is no law against it, and you are not under the law. But there is always somebody watching your life. The bottom line is simply this: it may be your children.

Father, we do thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus.