

I. The Drift from Biblical Christianity

As you know, we have been coming through the book of Romans, and I do not know a better book for our church to go through right now. Yet, at the same time, I am so excited that when we finish the book of Romans, we start the book of 2 Corinthians. That is where we are really going to put the meat to ministry and really understand some of the things, and all of this is in God's timing. Before you can minister to people, you have to learn to be able to deal with people and get along with people. I have showed you that Romans 14 and 15 are the two greatest chapters in the Bible that really show us that aspect.

Last week, we started and came through the verse that probably is the greatest single verse in the Bible for what we should be as Christians. It is amazing to me, and some of you older folks probably understand what I am about to say. It is amazing to me how far we get off track without really understanding and knowing it. Somebody asked me a question a couple of weeks ago about the nation of Israel, and the Jews today as a nation, and the Jews today as people that you meet and go to synagogues on Sunday or Saturday and do their whole deal, and they classify themselves to be Jews. The average person does not understand, because they do not understand the Bible, how absolutely unrecognizable the nation of Israel is today from what God intended it to be in the Bible.

Even in Jesus' time, if you study Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John very carefully, you find that they have reinvented themselves. When we come through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you find the Pharisees and the Sadducees. But you go back to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, and there are no Pharisees or Sadducees back there. How did this group become the religious constituency that is leading Israel when you do not even find them in the Bible when Israel was where they were to be with God? Of course, the answer to that is because they invented them. Even in Christ's day, the nation of Israel was so far away from God that it was almost unrecognizable to what God intended it to be in the Old Testament.

The Bible the Jews follow is an Old Testament. It is called the Torah, which would be the first five books of the Bible. The Old Testament Jewish Bible is broken down into the Law, the Writings, and the Prophets. That is what they had in the Old Testament. But now, if you go into a synagogue today, you would find a Midrash, you would find a Talmud, your Talmud Mishnah. All these are books that they have written to get around the Bible that God has given them. My point is simply this: the average, and you do not know this if you do not understand history in the Bible, the average Jew today that is an Orthodox believing Jew, no matter where you go, they are so far away from what God intended them to be that if you put the Bible characteristic of what they are and look at what they are today, they are not even close.

Yet, I look at that and I think to myself that churches are the same way today. The farther we get away from the source, which is Antioch in the book of Acts, of our truth, and the closer we get to the second coming of Christ, the more apostasy sets in and the more things change. I teach a lot

of things on Bible study that the average person listens to, and they scratch their head and they say, "Wow, I wonder where he got that." We believe the King James Bible is the absolute perfect Word of God without any apology, and we stand on that and preach that and teach that. That is strange to a lot of people. A lot of people say, "Why do you do that?" or "What is the difference?" or "What is the big deal?" The bottom line is that what we teach here as a church 200 years ago, 180 years ago, 150 years ago, was what everybody in Bible Christianity believed. We have not changed. It is the churches that have changed in what they believe, that the churches today, much like the nation of Israel, do not even resemble themselves.

I marvel, and I have told you this before, we have in Christianity today, did you ever ask yourself this question? We have in Bible Christianity today, mega churches. We have the internet. We have telecommunications. There is a little girl that just tried to sail around the world at 16 years old. She was out there 2,000 miles from any land mass in any direction, sailing, a 16-year-old girl in a 40-foot boat out there by herself. She had trouble. A big wave came over and knocked her mast off, and she was stranded and could not go anywhere. What did she do? She just reached over and pushed her little GPS signal button, and immediately somebody watching aboard someplace saw this light flashing and knew she was in trouble. She had a satellite phone. Here she is. No pay phones in the Indian Ocean. She had a telephone that could bounce off a satellite and make a call anywhere in the world. Now, pizza delivery would be a little tough, but it would be a good prank to play on people. My point is this: what a marvel of technology that is. They saved her.

The technology we have today is incredible. They rescued her two days later, all because she had the system to get there. You can have laser printing. We can send pictures anywhere. We can print stuff. We can get stuff done. It is incredible what we as Christians and the church have the ability to do today with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But did you know something? This always amazed me. It bothers me, but it amazes me, with all of that technology that we have today, we are getting less done in churches than they did in the book of Acts when they did not have any of those things. Have you ever stopped and pondered why that is? Because all of that technology, ladies and gentlemen, is no replacement for the Holy Spirit of God in your life. Churches have come a long way from what they once were. Obviously, if that is true, then Christianity and Christians have come a long way.

I say it all the time that I feel sorry for people that grow up in this amalgamated mess called Christianity today. I really do. Joe Christensen asked a question a couple of Thursday nights ago out of John 5 about the pool of Bethesda where the man that was crippled was laying there waiting for the moving of the waters. I walked you through that, and I showed you how that was a picture of the nation of Israel in their calamity at that time. But then I also told you, I think I told you, that that is a great message picturing where the church is at today. Because here is a man who was sitting around this pool. The pool was a picture of the Holy Spirit of God and the Word of God. Yet, the Bible says that this man is impotent. That means that he has no power. He is blind. That means that he is spiritually blind. The Bible says that he is halt. That means he has no walk with God. The Bible says that he is withered. That means he has no work for God. That

is a picture of the church today. We are sitting around the Bible waiting for God to do something, but nothing is getting done.

I remember when my kids were just little, somebody had brought them kind of like a car console that you sat on the floor. It had a steering wheel on it, it had a key on it, it had a horn on it, and it had windshield wiper washers. What you did is you sat on the floor, and it went across your legs like you were driving. I remember they both had one, and they were ramming the gears and honking the horn and nudging the windshield wipers and steering the wheel. I walked through there one day getting ready for church, and I looked down and watched them just going at it. I thought to myself, "You know what? That is like so many churches I know." There is a lot of action and there is a lot of movement, but nothing is hooked up. That is true of Christians today. We have come so far short.

Christians today do not understand. They look like the world. They dress like the world. They talk like the world. They listen to the world's music. They are a worldly version of what the world thinks Christianity should be. They do not understand the meaning of the word sanctification: that once you get saved, you are no longer to look like the world. You are no longer to act like the world. You do not listen to the things of the world. You do not do the things of the world. What we have done is the same thing that Israel did. It is the same thing that churches have done. We have amalgamated, tried to take God and the Bible and the world and put it all in one big, nice, neat package. Yet, in spite of all that, the Bible is still true.

Amos 3:3

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

We live in Christianity, in most of our lives, in an illusion world. This church is designed for one real aspect, really, and that is to be a reality check for all of us. Romans 14 and 15 is really that reality check because Romans 14 and 15 brings us back to what it means in the Bible when the Bible makes the statement for us to be Christ-like, and we have lost that term today and we do not understand it. What does it mean in the Bible to be Christ-like? Of course, we all have our own definitions of that. But today, for the last week as we come through here, we are going to look at that.

We looked at a great passage in Romans 15:1, which is the great verse:

Romans 15:1

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

You hear me talk a lot about definitive verses. This is what I have learned from the Bible over the years. I have learned over the years that the Bible is a book that God has a design in how it goes together. God has built every teaching that He has around a single verse that basically defines that teaching. I call them definitive passages or definitive verses. Thursday night, Sunday morning, many, many times, almost in everything that we do, I give you a definitive verse. Jenny asked the question Thursday night, "What is the definitive verse on sin?" It is important to know those. But Romans 14 and 15 are really the definitive passages on us as Christians. There is no

question. When you come through Romans 14 and 15, you are faced with one of two things: either you are or you are not. It takes away the smoke and mirrors of what we think it means to be Christ-like. Ladies and gentlemen, to be Christ-like simply means, and this is so simple, I feel even stupid saying it, being Christ-like simply means that you are like Christ. But we like to take those things and mask them in every other thing that we do so we can do it.

I have told you many, many, many times, the ministry is people. Ministry is you one-on-one with somebody else, helping them, getting them through the crisis in their life when they cannot get through it themselves. You will remember we built this around the study of a journey of a man's life, Abraham, the friend of God, and I showed you. We built it on the great verse in Romans 14:23 that simply said:

Romans 14:23

For whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

I showed you how that your job and my job is to get to that place where we can trust God for everything in our lives. At that point, when you amass that, then you have the ability to help somebody.

II. Romans 14-15: A Christian's Reality Check

Now, the breakdown of this chapter, and in July, we are going to take the whole month of July, and it will probably spill over into August, I think. So many of you are new Christians, and you all got your wide margin Bibles, and you are all taking notes. But I want to show you basically how you want to put your notes in your Bible. The Bible breaks itself down as far as putting notes in, in four concepts. I want to walk you through those. I do not know that we will get through it in four weeks, but we are going to start it in July. I want to show you a practical way. I am going to show you what I did. It may not entirely work for you, but the concept is the same. I am going to show you how to do it, and I am going to give you some examples.

Here is a great example. This great chapter, chapter 15, breaks itself down into seven great defining concepts of what your life and my life should be. If you have a Bible and you have Romans 15 and you open it up, you ought to have this chapter broken down in these seven concepts, because this whole chapter basically wraps itself around what a Christian ought to be and gives you the seven concepts. Three of them we have already looked at.

1. We looked at verse one last time where it says, we are to bear the infirmities of weaker Christians.
2. We looked at the second one last week that was found in verse two, that we are to please people. Now, that does not mean that you are a man-pleaser or what Paul talks about in Galatians 1:10. He says, "I do not please any man." He is not talking about in this sense. He is talking about by not preaching popular things. You will preach what the Word of God says. This is a different concept here. This is as you and me as a Christian. If you are in this church and you are a Christian and I am a Christian, my job is to not bring any stress into your life, but help you, please you in the sense of helping you grow.

3. We also saw in verse two and talked about the fact, this to be the third thing, that he edifies other Christians.
4. The fourth thing, found in verse seven, this is what we are going to talk about today, is that he receives other people to the glory of God.
5. The fifth thing, found in verse 14, is he admonishes other people.
6. The sixth thing, in verse 27, is that he ministers to other people.
7. The last thing, the seventh one, found in verse 36, is he prays for other people.

It is these seven principles that are what we as Christians are supposed to be. Bible Christianity has come a long way from where it is. I think the book of Colossians has always been one of my favorite books. I do not know if you know this or not, but when John writes the book of Revelation, you know that he writes to the seven churches. When Paul writes his epistles to the churches, you realize that he also writes to seven churches. Do you know on an upper level of Bible study, the seven churches that Paul writes to match up to the seven churches that John writes to? The church that John writes to last is the church that you and I are part of, and that is the Laodicean church. The book that Paul writes to in his writings that matches up to Laodicea would be the church at Colossians. Colossians was just about 12 miles south of Laodicea. The proximity of that is quite incredible because in the book of Colossians, we really find, remember I talked about a minute ago how that Christians are so far from what God wanted them to be. They have lost the definition. They fancy themselves as something even when they are not, and they are really out of whack with it. That is what the book of Colossians deals with.

You want to outline the book of Colossians? Here it comes. This is easy. At the top of your book of Colossians, Colossians pictures the Laodicean church, and here is the outline:

- Chapter 1: He redefines who Christ is. You know why? Because that is the number one problem we have. We have lost who Christ is. So he goes through and he redefines in chapter one, who Christ is.
- Chapter 2: He shows you what the real problem is in Christianity today. You know what the problem is in Christianity today and what has destroyed Christianity? The only thing men never learned from history is the fact that men never learned anything from history. It is found in verse eight. It is the fact that we have spoiled Christianity through philosophy. Philosophy and Christianity are two opposite ends of the spectrum. What happened in the early church, for those of you that were in church history, what happened? The manuscripts came out of Antioch, the whole thing went into play, and what took place? The Christian philosophers came in, Origen and the boys, down in Alexandria, Egypt, and what did they do? They took the pagan philosophies and tried to put them into Bible Christianity, and it destroyed Christianity. We are finding today that that is exactly what is happening today. People are trying to take philosophy, bridge it into Christianity, and it can never happen. He tells us in verse eight that the church was spoiled

through philosophy, vain deceit, tradition of men, that is what philosophy is, the rudiments of the world, that is what philosophy is, and then he says, "and not after Christ."

➤ Chapters 3 and 4: He tells us how that you and I are to go against those things and what our job is and how we are to deal with it in those particular times, my response to it.

Because of that, we have learned and lost the definition of a lot of things. We know the term saved, but we do not know what it really means. We know the term born again, but we could not explain the process of our life dependent on it. We certainly have lost sight of the word sanctified, but we think that we can get saved and listen to the world's music and do whatever the world does and still be a viable witness for Christ, and what a delusion that is. Of course, we have also lost the definition of the term Christ-like. This is what Romans 15 really deals with.

Now, I am going to read today, yes, that was my introduction, Romans 15:5-12. Follow along with me if you would, please.

Romans 15:5-12

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:

And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.

And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

Now Father, we do thank you and praise you today and help us to lay this out. Lord, there are good people in this church. There really are. You do not bring us very many people who do not have the ability to really be everything that you want them to be. Lord, I pray for them today. I pray that you will help them in the world that we live in, that you will help them get the right definitions. I am always amazed, and Lord, I know as we start Saturday, we are going to have to really get crusty with some things. We are really going to have to speak very frankly and get some definitions laid out that the leaders and the people who are the future leaders of this church get back to some kind of common ground of ministry to get out of this illusion of what

Christianity has become today and what Christians have become. Lord, help us today as we look at this and we try to build a work here that is for your honor and glory. We will thank you and praise you in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

III. Qualities of a Christ-Like Christian: Patience and Consolation

This passage, we see a number of things. Again, it is a defining passage, and it is a defining passage on our, and really our reality check of where we are at and what we are trying to do in concept of being Christ-like. Now, the first thing, look at verse five, and this kind of moves through these so I can spend some time on to keep things here.

Romans 15:5

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

Those are two great qualities that we should have as Christians in dealing with people. Obviously, the first one is patience. It takes patience to work with people, and patience is something that is required if you are ever going to get to the place where you help people. Now, when I say patience, this again is misdefined. Most of you take that to mean that you do not ever get in anybody's face about anything or deal with anything, but you just are patient. That is not what I am talking about.

I look at the young people today. I was a youth pastor back in 1976 up to about 1986 someplace in there, and a few of you were in my youth group back then. Steve Bracken was 12 years old when I first met him. Michelle, how old were you? You were about one and a half or something like that. You were a counselor in my youth department back then. I look at the youth today, and I think to myself, "My, my, my, I would never make it as a youth pastor today because I would kill the kids." Back in my day, when somebody, we went to a camp one time with another church here in town, and I had some real bozos that were problems. Four or five of them thought they were real smart, real cute, and they disrespected the other pastor. I do not know if Steve was there, I do not know if he remembered, you were probably too young yet, some of you. I do not know if anybody else was there, but I did not put up with it. We were down in a place outside of Springfield at a camp, and it had been raining, and it was a dirt, dusty old place. I made them on their face, on their belly, crawl down that road through every mud puddle, through every piece of mud and dirt. I know, I know, I can see it right now, I am going to be sued this afternoon by the child. I made them crawl down and then crawl back and then apologize to this guy for the disrespect.

That was the old days. You cannot do that today. You do that today, and people say, "Well, I do not think that is right." Well, I guess you sit there and try to teach somebody. The bottom line is, if their parents would have done what is right, we never would have had the situation where they were disrespectful anyhow. I feel bad about having the kids crawl down. If I had my way, I would have had the parents crawl down, but they were all deacons in the church back then. What

really got me in trouble, the first camp, well, a number of things got me in trouble, but the first camp we ever had was a real camp. I had Mel Shabaka come in. He tore the paint off the walls. That was the worst camp I ever had in my life. That was the night, and we literally joke about this, that all the demons got cast out of the camp. I had a 14, 13-year-old kid that was demon possessed that night that I had to deal with in the middle of the night out in a dark place, and he picked me up and threw me across the room. I could tell you some horror stories. It was a bad camp. It was a good camp, but the problem started when we got back to camp. You know why? Because we had a great camp. I had like 27 kids saved out of about 80 kids there, and every kid that got saved was on fire for God and wanted to go home and live for God and get baptized. The problem was when they got home and told their mom and dads, who were deacons, who were finance committee members, whatever those are, who were people who were high up muckety-mucks in the church, that their kids really were not saved. Who do you think they blamed for it? They did not care that their kids now were saved and on the way to heaven. They cared about the fact that they now were exposed, that they had not done what is right. What would that be like for you to be a deacon in a church sitting in a high arch someplace where you are a Sunday school teacher or some high muckety-muck, and you just find out that your kid was never saved? Everybody else was going to heaven, but your kid was going to hell. Who do they blame for that? God? No, they blame you for it. That is just what it is.

I would not be in that situation today for anything in the world simply because of the fact that it is a terrible thing, and parents let their kids do stuff today that I would not even allow. I was at somebody's place the other day, and we were talking to a kid that is Brian Robbins up in Monmouth, and was talking to him on the phone, and he was talking about how that it is Bible study. He tried to have a Bible study, and he said, "You know what? I cannot get anything done." He says, "You know what? The kids are texting on their phones while I am trying to teach, and they are talking back and forth." I said, "Brian, whose fault is that?" I said, "If you do not know how to command discipline in your own youth group, then you better get somebody else in there that can." You know what I do? I collect every cell phone they have. I say, "Let us see your cell phones, folks. Put them on the table." Then I collect them all, and I say, "You can have them when you go back." Either you are going to run it, or they are going to run it. That is the way I was raised, you see. I know I have showed it many, many times, I am a dinosaur in Central Park in New York City. That is just where it is at. But I am telling you, we have come to the place where you have got to have patience in the ministry, but that does not mean you let people do whatever they want to do. I am patient with people, but I give them a standard, a biblical standard they have got to go by. When they break it a thousand times, I am still patient, but the bottom line is simply this: you cannot, it does not mean you just have patience without any kind of structure. A lot of people today in ministry are afraid to put structure to it. They do not want to make people mad. Hey, that is my spiritual gift, man. I have no problem with it. In ministry, you are not going to please everybody all the time, and the moment you try to think you can, you are in trouble.

Then the second thing here, and it is another great quality, it says, "consolation." Now, the God of patience and consolation. You know what that means? We think it means, and it does, to console people. I am consoling you, I am helping you. But the word consolation carries more

than that meaning with it. What happens when you get out of control of your finances, and you listen to the radio, you are driving down the street, and you find a quickie loan office who is going to help you do what with all your bills? Consolidate. So you owe sixty thousand dollars to 150 people, and so you go owe sixty thousand dollars to one person, and he pays off all your bills, and you can work it that way. That is called consolidation. Consolation is the form of that word, and it means more than just comforting somebody. It means to give form to something. In other words, the true greatest aspects of ministry is patience with the right kind of structure, but also consolation, helping you form yourself into something. My job is to help you conform yourself to the image of Christ, firm you up to be Christ-like. That is the job. That is not only my job, that is your job, and that is the whole concept, and that is the first two qualities that he talks about God that He has that we need to have.

IV. Qualities of a Christ-Like Christian: Like-Mindedness and Unified Witness

Then verse five also it says we are told to be like-minded.

Romans 15:5

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

The like-mindedness here is not just that you and I have to agree on the same thing. It is you and I agree on the same thing based on what the Word of God says, that our mind is, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." We are like-minded, and I have found that this is so true. We saw this in chapter 14. We may disagree on minor issues, that is immaterial, but on the doctrinal issues, we are solid on, and we have the same mind. Churches have knocked down drag-outs and splits over the stupidest stuff. I have seen churches get in a fight and split over the color of the choir robes. I have seen them decide whether they wanted to have padded pews on the back or not, and they get in a fight over it. Believe it or not, I had one guy I knew that left the church one time, and I asked him what was the deal, and he said, "You know what? They were spending too much money." I said, "Well, what were they spending money on for one thing?" He said, "They were spending a lot of money on the toilet paper." I said, "You have got to be kidding me." There are things that you fight over. At the same time, they will fight over stupid stuff like that, but they will allow the NIV to come into church, and nobody says a peep. That is traditionally churches. I am going to teach you guys some things on these Saturdays, and we are going to go to work.

Now look at verse six:

Romans 15:6

That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I love this, "with one mind and one mouth glorify God." You see, what you have in your head has to come out of your mouth. The problem with Christians is they do not have anything in their

head, so everything goofy comes out of their mouth. Now let me tell you one of the most embarrassing times I ever had. I am not a good dresser. I mean, I find that funny. You are not so hot yourself. I do not need this at 60, guys. I just really do not. I mean, I do not care what this guy did, where he was, he always looked like a million dollars. He was tall, he was good-looking. I was just good-looking, I was not tall. Wherever you saw this guy, he looked like he just stepped out of a parade. Whenever you saw me, I looked like the parade just stepped all over me. That is just the way I am. I am not a good dresser. I do not dress for style. I do not like clothes that have, I mean, some of you guys, you know, you have an AF on it, and that is fine, but I do not like to wear stuff that everybody else wears. It is just me. I not only march to a different drum, I try to reinvent the drum. That is just where I am at. That is me.

I just never came to the point where I could ever, and one time, this was the most embarrassing time in my life, but it was a great example because it fits where I am at here. Somebody said, "We are having a deal, and you have got to have a dark suit." Well, I am not going to go buy a dark suit because in my mind, I have a very dark blazer, almost black, and I have a very dark black pair of pants. So I put it on, and it looked wonderful. I had it on, and I looked absolutely great. The moment I left the house and walked out into the light, it was two different shades of dark blue. Now, how does that happen? Dark blue is dark blue. My point is this: it looked fine when I was in the house under the fake lights, but when I went outside into the real light, it exposed that they did not match. That was the most embarrassing thing in my life. But you know what? I thought about that many, many times, the light of this one mouth, one mind. You see, in your own little world, what you say in your mouth and your mind matches up until you get into the light of the Word of God, and it shows you that it does not match. See how the thing works? I got that illustration in the shower this morning. I always want you to write that down someplace. I needed a good illustration, and I got that in the shower.

It is a great concept. The Word of God forms your mind, from which it forms the words you speak. I talked to you a couple of weeks ago. I talked about what the Bible does, the important thing, how we build a sound mind, which builds sound doctrine, which builds sound speech, which builds sound word, which in the end of the day, builds sound faith. That is exactly what he is talking about here.

V. Receiving One Another: Remembering God's Grace

Look at verse seven, and here is where we are going to be today.

Romans 15:7

Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

Now the first thing I want you to see there, and this is very important, it does not look like much, but there is a lot to it. It simply says that the reason why God received us was for His honor and glory. God did not save you for your honor and glory. He saved you for His honor and glory. He did not take you in so you could do whatever you wanted to do. He took you in so you could do for Him what He wanted you to do for Him. He received you for a purpose, and that purpose was

for His honor and glory. You will remember that last time we talked in Romans 14:1, that was the whole essence there that we are to receive a weaker brother.

Now I want to say it again. I know of no two other chapters that lay us bare and define us for what we really are in light of what we pretend or we think we are as Christians better than these two chapters. They are sleeper chapters, they really are. There are some chapters that you just want to stay away from in the Bible because you know when you read it, it is not going to come out in your favor. But this is not two of them. This looks like it is a very easy chapter just to start walking through, and boy, you get to the middle of it, you realize you are in a minefield. I told you last week, and boy, it is a great truth, how unchristian some Christians are in their Christianity.

There is a confusing concept on receiving people. I need to touch this too because over there in 2 John 1:10-11 it says:

2 John 1:10-11

If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

I have had people take that verse, I just need to cover all the bases here because maybe there is somebody here that is under this persuasion. I have had people tell me that when Jehovah's Witnesses come to their door, they never let them in the house. Or Mormons come to their door and never let them in the house. Whether you let them in your house or not is your deal. The bottom line is, but what they do is they use this verse to prove that. They say that because they are preaching obviously a terrible bad doctrine, if you receive them into your house, you are also receiving part of their iniquity or partakers of their evil deeds or whatever. Let me say this to you, that is not what the word receive means in the Bible. It is not talking about having somebody come into your house. When you come over to my home, and I feel this when I come over to your home, basically my home is yours. If you want something to drink, you are fine. If you are hungry, we will feed you. My home is yours. Pick up the mortgage payment on the way out and take care of it this month.

But receiving is more than just "come on in." Receiving is a Christian attitude that says, "What I got is yours." Give you the shirt off my back, so to speak. "What is mine is yours." That is a private joke between me and Steve. He liked the yellow shirt that I went out and I wore a couple of Sundays ago. He said, "I really liked it. Where did you get it?" I have had it for a year. I have only worn it. This is the first time I wore it. I had it washed, and I brought it and I gave it to him today. But he went out and bought one, and I always got two of them, so what are you going to do? Anyway. But it means when you receive somebody as a Christian, it means that we are family. We are family. You do not have to be, if you are thirsty at my house, you do not have to say, "Hey Bob, can I have a drink?" Mine is yours. That is that atmosphere. It is not what they are talking about by just having a Jehovah's Witness knock on your door and says, "Can I talk to you a minute?" And you say, "Yeah, come on in." And he sits down there for 20 minutes, and you say, "No, thank you," and he leaves. That is not the same concept. You have got to understand

that. People get confused sometimes. But it is the concept of openly, honestly, based on our relationship with God, receiving others.

This is such a true statement. You know that when most of us came to God, we were in pretty sorry shape. I know I was. Many of you, when you came to this church the first time, you were not anywhere near where you are at now, were you? I had a lady call me this week, just as a testimony, a sweet gal, one of my best buddies in the whole wide world, talked to me and basically called me up to tell me how that a couple of women in this church have really, really, really ministered to her, and really, really, she is impressed with what they have done and how much they have done that. I did not say anything to her, I just took it and thanked her for it. But I thought to myself afterwards, "Boy, you know what? When those ladies came into this church, they were not that way." God does some tremendous things, you see.

Many of you, when you came into this church, you were not where you are at now. Many of you, your life was a complete wreck. You had no Bible, you had no power, you had no purpose, you had no perspective, you had no passion, not for anything of God, anyhow. You had no relationship with God. Many of you have been in bad marriages or at least bad relationships. Many of you were in immoral relationships. Some of you were stuck to the world so thick. Some of you had been rebellious to your parents growing up, and you found out that that rebellion did not stop with your parents. You took that rebellion right out in everything that was an authority structure around you, and Dr. Phil says, "How did that work for you?" You are in a mess with that. Some of you were in drugs, some of you were drinking, some of you, you were just a mess. That is where we were. Some of you had defrauded other people, some of you were in trouble with the IRS, some of you had defrauded on your bank loans, some of you had cheated other people out of money. It was, and I remember, I remember the sorrow in so many people's eyes. I remember the anguish and the hurt of a life that did those kinds of things. Somebody said one time, and it is a true statement, "The world never leaves a man any better than it finds him." Boy, that is so true.

Now let me ask you a question. What happened? What happened when you came to this church? What happened when you came into my office and cried out in your heart and laid out all the sorrows of your problems? What happened when you started coming to Thursday Night Bible study, and you come over and you sit out and talk with me, and we put a plan together for you? What happened? What happened when you wanted to make a new life that you knew you had blown it and you made some mistakes, and you lost your marriage or you lost this or you lost that, and what happened? What happened when you wanted to turn it around and make your life finally count because you had learned through the process of mistakes that that was a dead end street? I will tell you what happened. You know what happened? We received you, no questions asked. You did not have a form you had to fill out. If you committed 10 terrible sins, you did not go into one category and sit on one side. That would be this side over here. And if you only committed eight or nine, you went here, and you committed five or six over here, and you guys were all perfect. Not, but anyway.

I have a story one time, a guy died and went to heaven. He was walking through with St. Peter, and he is looking all around, and he is looking at everything, and he sees a bunch of people over

here, a big room filled out with thousands of people, and they are all eating chicken dinners. He says to St. Peter, "Who are these people?" And he says, "Oh, these are all the Methodists. The Methodists always have chicken dinners." Walks into this other great big room, and there are five million people playing bingo. He says, "Who are these?" And he says, "These are all the Catholics." Walks into this other big room, and it is filled with people, and there are signs all around it. Said, "No talking, quiet, no speaking, no noise, no nothing." And he says, "Who are these people?" And he says, "Well, these are the Baptists." He says, "How come you have all those signs around?" He says, "Because they think they are the only ones up here."

You came to this church, I will tell you what happened. We received you, no questions asked, on what basis? Because that is what God had done with each of us. That is exactly what God has done with each of us. I thank God that God does not treat me or does not treat us like some of God's people treat other Christians. I do not care. That is the basis. You say, "Well, they do not deserve it." Nobody deserves it. If we got grace, if we got all what we deserve, we would all be screaming in hell this morning. But you know what? When you were unlovable, God loved me. When we were despicable, God cleaned us up. It is just one of those things. God's people after salvation, I mean, I am just being honest. We are going to talk about these things, and these are things you need to understand. Romans 14 and 15 are great definitive chapters because there is nowhere to hide in here. God's people after salvation, they tend to drift away and to forget.

One of my favorite Psalms that I call it a Psalm of remembrance. There are several Psalms in the Bible to me or what I call Psalms of remembrance. That is one of the three infirmities that we have, not forgetting and not remembering. But Psalms 40:1-3 is a Psalm that every Christian ought to have memorized. It simply says this:

Psalms 40:1-3

I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.

You know what? We forget. We forget the day that we were stuck in that miry pit. It says miry clay. Have you ever been in miry clay? Miry clay sucks you down. You try to walk through it, your shoes stay there, your feet come out. It is impossible to get through. That is what the world and its sin had done to you and me. The miry clay, "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit." That is the pit of the life of sin that you and I were in before God saved you, and many of you fell back into after you got saved. God looked at you down in there, and God saw you down in there, and what did He do? He comes down through there, and He says, "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and he set my feet upon a rock." What else did He do? "He established my goings." If that was not enough, you know what He did then? "He put a new song in your heart, even praise unto our God, that many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in

the Lord." You know what He did? He did what He should not have done. He did what we will not do sometimes. He received us. He received us.

Have you ever noticed how unchristian some Christians become in their Christianity? I understand it. God's people after they are saved, they forget. They forget. Titus 3:1-4 says:

Titus 3:1-4

Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,

To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

I am telling you, God's people after they get saved, they become, when they forget, and they start to drift away, and they start to get self-righteous, sanctimonious, judgmental, unforgiving, prideful, bitter spirit, no mercy. Oh, they hold a set of rules for everybody else, and then another set of rules for themselves. They want God's forgiveness. They can screw up their life. They can do this, and they run to God. Let me tell you something, ladies and gentlemen, the scribes, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees did not have much on God's people today. Now, how does all that happen? It is simple, we forget. We forget how filthy and how stench we were in the nostrils of God, and that God received us in spite of that. Verse seven says, "for his honor and glory." He cleaned us up, set our feet upon a rock, and established our going. He put a new song in our mouth, and praise unto our God, and many shall see, and what we do is we forget. What happens when we forget? What we know in our head does not come out of our mouth. The suit does not match.

Listen, in my lifetime, and I am not talking about anybody here, but in my lifetime in Christianity, I have learned some things. I am going to show you boys and girls some of those things when we start this next thing, and boy, it is going to be frank. So if you are somebody who is fragile, do not show up. Some of the most wicked, self-righteous, unmerciful people I have ever met in my life are saved, born again, blood washed, as sure as I am standing here, there is no doubt in my mind, children of God who simply forgot how rotten they are, and how rotten they were when God found them. What arrogance, what an arrogant attitude that God is willing to forgive you, but He is not willing to forgive somebody else. What arrogance to come to the point where we can say that God, all the things that we did in our life. Christians avoiding other Christians because they do not meet their standards. Let me tell you something. The first time God laid eyeballs on you, we did not look too hot either. But you know what He did? He received us. These chapters are rough, man. We receive others, clear and simple. When they want to do what is right and they want to get their life turned around and get saved or whatever, God is receiving us as a sinner. When we wanted to do what is right, He received us, and God gets the honor and glory out of it. You see, Christ-like means exactly what it says. It means Christ-like,

having your head and your mouth on the same level, doing the same thing with others that God has done with you.

VI. Christ's Example: Receiving the Gentiles

Now look at verse eight. He broadens it here. Look at verses eight through 12.

Romans 15:8-12

Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:

And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.

And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

Now he broadens it. Does anybody see what he is saying? You have been around in a short time, and you know something about the Bible. Do you see the great illustration that he is making here that puts it into the context of this? First of all, he says in verse eight that Christ was a minister of the circumcision. What does that mean? It means that His primary ministry when He came to this earth was to the nation of Israel and not Gentiles. In Matthew 10, when He sent the 12 out, He made specific instruction to them not to go to the Gentiles or to Samaria, if you have Gentiles, but only to the house of Israel. Do you know why that is? Because in the Old Testament, the Gentiles, you and me, ladies and gentlemen, we are Gentiles. You and me were extension and naturals of God, and He told God's people not to have anything to do with us. They hated the Gentiles. They are called dogs in the Old Testament. They are called uncircumcised dogs. That is a derogatory term.

There is a phrase in the Old Testament that I am sure you have read about and wondered many times and scratched your head. It is a phrase that it is a question you hope nobody ever asked on Thursday night Bible study, but everybody does. There is a phrase back there that simply says, "he that pisseth against the wall." Now, do not make that verse your testimony verse around the campfire, that is not what you want to do. But it is in the Bible for a reason. People look at that and they say, "Ooh, what this goes to show you that God is on a common moral level than you are sometimes." What does it mean when it says, when it is talking about somebody and it says, "he that pisseth against the wall?" You know who does that? A dog does that. Have you ever had a male dog? Now, I have always had dumb male dogs. They all squat like the girl, and you know that because we do not have any walls around our house. But they like my car tires, which I am not happy about that either. That is a dog. That is what a dog does. The rest of that derogatory term, that nasty term, is directed to the Gentiles. They hated them.

When they went in and took a Gentile nation, you know what they did? You know what God told them to do? God said, "You kill every man, you kill every woman, you kill every child, you kill every animal, you kill the horses, you kill the sheep, you kill everything." Somebody said, "Oh, what a mean old God." You do not even understand why God did that, do you? Because those Gentile nations were so wicked that everything that was touching them was so ungodly and satanic that it all had to be wiped out. Every time the nation of Israel did not follow that, they brought their sin right in, and it became the downfall of the nation of Israel. It is really a picture that when you get saved, you have got to get away from the world. You have got to burn your rock records, you have got to turn off the radio, you have got to get yourself squared away because every little piece you let come back in will drag you right back down. See, the devil is a lot smarter than we are. He will take the thing that you will not give up because you think you do not have to, and he will destroy you with it. They were having sex with the animals, they were involved in religious worship, and they killed them all.

Verses nine, 10, 11, and 12 tell us, but in spite of that, in spite of you and me as a Gentile on a broader scale, because of you and me as Gentiles and all the ungodliness and the filthiness we were in, every phony, fake religion on this planet, every debauchery and every sin and every cuss word and everything that we have in our world today came from the Gentiles, not the Jews. Yet, it tells us in nine, 10, 11, 12, in spite of that, God let us Gentiles in in spite of our wickedness. You know what He did? He received us.

Look at the verses:

Romans 15:9

As it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

This is Psalms 18:49.

Romans 15:10

And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

This is Deuteronomy 32:43.

Romans 15:11

And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.

This is Psalms 117:1.

Romans 15:12

And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

This is Isaiah 11:10.

You know why that is? Because God let us in when He did not have to let us in. Because God received us when we were unlovely and unreceivable, that we had committed every filthy thing

that we had done. And God said, "It is okay, come on in." But God's people get to that point, and they cannot do it. They just cannot do it.

I think one of my favorite stories in the Bible is in Acts 10. It is the story of Peter, who was a devout Jew, who was really the key apostle to the nation of Israel. When God was taking this concept from the nation of Israel and taking it to the Jew, or excuse me, from the Jew to the Gentile, I am sorry. It took a while, and people had lived now for 2,000, 3,000 years under the idea that Gentiles were filthy. Now suddenly God is going to turn the switch, and they are okay. That was not an easy concept. Peter was the leader. God was depending on him to get the message to the Jew that it is okay for the Gentiles to hear the Gospel. So what does He do? He takes Peter up on a rooftop. He puts him up on that rooftop, and he sees a vision. When that vision is, the Bible says that a big, big sheet, like you spread out for a picnic on the ground, came floating down. On it is all manner of food that he is not allowed to eat. In other words, God has made a stop at Arthur Bryant's and had that thing spread out. He is looking down there, and he is seeing barbecued pork. He is seeing barbecued beef. He is seeing ribs. He is seeing everything out there. He knows as an Old Testament pork-abstaining Jew, that is unclean. Then he hears the voice of God say, "Peter, go ahead and eat that." Peter said, "I am not going to eat that. I have never been unclean in all my life. I am not going to touch that stuff." You know what God said to him? It is a great lesson. God said to him, "Listen, Bozo, if you are going to work with me and you are going to be what I want you to do, you better get your head and your mouth on the same level. Do not you call unclean what I have cleansed." Better take that lesson in dealing with people.

VII. Christ: The Perfect Model

Many types in the Bible, are there not? Thousands of men, thousands of women who live, whose lives we can all learn from. We learn from the ones who do what is right. We learn from the ones who do what is wrong. Every effect, every cause and effect, everything that man gets into in sin is laid out clearly in the Bible. I showed you one of those in great detail a couple of weeks ago when we went through the life of Abraham. I also told you in Romans 15:4 last week it said that the things written aforetime were written for our learning, did it not? I showed you a couple of weeks before that, 1 Corinthians 10, that the Bible says that these things that happened in the Old Testament, these men and women's lives were for our own samples, our examples, and our admonition. But all of those examples in the Bible, as good as they are, they all have one flaw. That is that in every man's life, in every woman's life, even though they do the good, they are still sinners. For God to be a perfect God and the Bible to be a perfect book, and for God to be able to stand at the judgment seat of Christ and hold you and me accountable for what we did not do, He could not just rest on the examples of sinners who found God and did what was right. No, no, no, no, no. God would have to come down and be the perfect example Himself.

Jehovah's Witnesses will never get this. Have you ever talked to Jehovah's Witnesses when you talk to them on the Trinity? Here is their reasoning: "It does not make any sense that God would reinvent Himself as Jesus Christ. I mean, can you imagine you reinventing yourself, and it just is illogical?" Well, the word illogical is not ever in God's vocabulary when it comes to Himself. But

a Jehovah's Witness cannot see why God did what He did. God is a spirit, you do not see God. But God wanted a man to test Himself, the man, for a number of reasons, but one of the reasons is He had to give you and me as a human being a perfect model of everything that we needed to have. David is good, Jeremiah is good, Moses is good, Abraham is good, they are all good, but they are all sinners. For God to have a holy book to be a holy God, He had to come down and be the primary example Himself.

That is a great lesson for any of you boys sometime that want to get into the ministry down the line is that when you lead, you need to understand that you need to, or you are in ministry, that you are not just like anybody else. You need to be the primary example. You cannot be perfect, but you need to do it cleaner and better than anybody else around you. If you cannot, then do not get into it. It is just that simple, that is the model. That is the model. Christ was my model for everything. If I want to study being a missionary, and you were all missionaries, you heard me tell you last week that your job is to have a job where you have got a job, so you can earn money to pay your bills, to support yourself, so what? You can go out and do the ministry that God wants you to do, you are a missionary. So my model for missionary is Him. You know what He did? He left His culture, He left the throne of glory, He left the angels, He left the Father, He came down here, and He took on the body of a man, and He identified with the culture that He was going to, and thereby showing me the absolute model for ministry, identifying with the people that you are trying to reach. My model, He is my model.

He is the model Christian. Have you ever noticed how every time He is faced with an issue, He has one phrase that He uses constantly? "It is written." He constantly does what I try to get you to constantly do, and that is learn the Bible principles, except in His case, He did not have to learn them, He was them. But by being the model, it shows you that in every situation He fell Himself into, He did not try to deal with it on His own, He did not use His grandma's homespun wisdom, He went back to the absolute book with the principles that told you how to deal with it. When the devil came to Him in Matthew 4, the devil tried to get Him to do three things, and those three things were incredible things to study. But you know what He says every time? Every time he comes, and there is a great lesson in this, the devil comes to Him the first time and tries to get Him to do something, He says, "It is written," quotes the book. The devil comes the second time, and He says, "It is written," quotes the book. The devil comes the third time, He says, "It is written," He quotes the book. You know what the devil does? He gives up, because he knows, he knows, he knows, as long as you stay with the book, he has no end in your life. He gave up on the perfect model because he knew the perfect model was going to waste his day by always going back to the book. You learn Bible principles, you learn the book, then whatever your faith within life, and you go to the book instead of your own goofiness, you will not have near the problems you have got.

He is my model. He is my model for obedience. I told you last week, He had no life of His own. What are you doing with one? His only job down here and the only passion He had was to fulfill the Father's will. He is my model of forgiveness.

Ephesians 4:32

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

That is your model. He forgave you, why can you not forgive somebody? He is my model for being a servant.

Romans 15:3

For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

Philippians 2:6-7

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

He is my model for the witness of the world. Have you ever read over there in 1 Timothy 6:13? Right in the middle of Paul telling Timothy about the ministry and laying out all the details, I read it for years and years and years and scratched my head, could not figure it out. Why in the middle of, right at the end of Timothy, when Paul is laying it out to him in 1 Timothy 6, why did he bring up Pontius Pilate and Jesus Christ in a chapter that had nothing to do with that but a chapter that had to do with him being a minister and a good Christian and a good testimony and witness? You know why he did that? Because the perfect model of you and my witness to the world, the perfect model of what we ought to follow and how we witness to the world was set up by how He witnessed to Pontius Pilate before they crucified Him. He is my model. He is my model. I wonder if we went to your Facebook or your website this morning, what your models would be. I wonder if we walked into your bedroom today and saw what models you follow.

He is my model for giving.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

He gave everything. He did not just give what was convenient, He gave everything. He did not give out of the abundance of what He had. He gave everything that He had to God, and then it did not matter because everything belonged to God anyhow. He is the model. He is the model. You can find lots of good models. He is the perfect model. He is the model for ministry. You know what He did? He did what I follow what He did. He took 12 men, and He invested His life in those 12 men for three and a half years. At the end of three and a half years, those men hanging out with Him, experiences with Him, seeing Him, listening to Him, He taught them daily or everything that He did, He felt confident that He could go back to heaven and those 12 could carry on the work. That is what I do here. Except I have got a few more than 12. But it is the model I follow because He is the perfect model.

He is the model for your marriage. Somebody says, "Well, I have got problems with my marriage." Well, who would not with a bozo like you? "Well, my wife is in submission." Why would she want to follow somebody like you? The Bible says, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church." Read that passage, find out what your job is to her, and then start doing it. I know there are lots of good places you can go. Song of Solomon is a good place. There is 1 Corinthians 7 is a good place. Good places to go. You want a perfect model? There it is. It would go back to the fact that that is why no women in the New Testament ever rejected Christ. She saw in Him what the lady wants to see in you. Not hard.