

I. Introduction to Romans 15 and Christ-likeness

If you have your Bibles this morning, let's turn back to Romans 15. You know that we have been coming through the book of Romans, and we've pretty much laid out the book of Romans in just about every aspect of it. We're coming down to the last couple of chapters. I think probably, as far as you and I are concerned, the two greatest chapters in Romans are chapter 14 and 15. When you get into chapter 16, know that there's some great information in there. He's basically saying goodbye and thanking people and talking to people, but still there's some great stuff in there that we'll need to look at.

In Romans 14 and 15, we really saw and understood how our relationship should be to each other, the family of God. Last week we looked at the fourth aspect. I told you that this chapter, Romans 15, is built around seven major principles. We looked at the fourth one last week, and that is the aspect of receiving people. We talked about being Christ-like. That's been really the theme of Romans 15: what does it mean for us as Christians?

Most people don't know that the Bible says in Acts 11 that they were first called Christians at Antioch. Antioch is in Syria, and Antioch is really the birthplace of New Testament Christianity. It's where it all started. The word "Christian" was not a popular term when it was first used. Many of the terms that we have today were not popular or good terms when they were first used.

Now, we're Baptists. I know that there are a lot of goofy Baptists out there, and there really are. A lot of guys, when they start churches, don't want to call it a Baptist church because of what so many goofy Baptists stand for, and they don't want to be identified with that. So they call their church another name, but then whatever name you call it, you'll wind up being identified with something. In our church, we're a Baptist church. We're a Baptist church because we know and believe what the word "Baptist" stood for in its beginning. The word "Baptist" was never used as a good term. The real term for it was "Pedro Anabaptist," or sometimes you'll find it just "Anabaptist." Anabaptist is a term that was given to people like you and me who were Bible believers down through history because they would not baptize their babies. They would not believe that salvation was found through water baptism. So the Roman Catholic Church, who was the great enemy of the Baptists, called them Anabaptists. Around 1600, somewhere in there, they dropped the "Anna," and so we're known as Baptists. Most people don't even know that.

Most people don't know the word "Christian" was not a good word when it started out. The word "Christian" was given to Christianity or Christians by their enemies. Acts 11 is where you find the first record of anybody being called Christian. It was given to us by the Roman government at that point because the Roman government had 500, 600, 800 gods. They had a god for everything. Our week—Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday—are all based on Roman gods. Our months are based on the Roman gods. So much of our culture and our society goes back to Rome, and then back to the Greeks. The Romans really got it from the Greeks. Anyway, they had hundreds of gods. They had a god for everything.

Christianity only had one God, the true God of the Bible. They looked at that as kind of a poor man's religion and made fun of it. Not only that, but Christians were talking about the fact that where the Romans had their gods in temples, the Christians were talking about that their God lived inside them. So the Romans, obviously making sport of that and making fun of that concept, said, "Oh, so your God lives inside you, and your God is Christ? Yes. And He lives inside you? Yes. Well, I guess that makes you a little Christ." That's where the word "Christian" came from. It means "little Christ" because there was a true line of believers that held to that, and that's where they went from there.

So when we talk about being Christ-like, which is really the theme of Romans 14 and 15, it simply means what it says. It means that you and I are to be like Christ in what we think and how we deal with situations. I talk about Bible principles all the time, and I try to keep before you the importance of learning Bible principles because it's Bible principles, living them, and using them in the right format that really makes you Christ-like. Christ-like is simply being like Christ in the way you think, in the way you deal with problems, in the way you deal with circumstances, and in the last message we've had coming down through here, how you receive people.

Paul made two great analogies, and we looked at them last week. He told you and me that we're to receive other people based on the fact that when you and I were unlovable, when you and I were unreceivable, when you and I were everything against God that God stood for, what did God do? God received you and me. He said on that basis, we don't have any right not to receive somebody else. God didn't put any conditions on receiving you. He received you on the basis of His Son dying on the cross for you. Of course, that was the point that he made last week: that we are to receive people.

He broadened it then; you remember that he went even farther than that, and he talked about the Gentiles. The Gentile nations—and by the way, you and I, unless you're an Orthodox Jew here this morning, which I don't think we have any—you're a Gentile. He goes and talks about that the Gentile nations were totally against God. They were against everything that God wanted and did. In spite of that, the Jews were not allowed to have anything to do with them. In fact, in Matthew 10, where He sends out the twelve apostles, He clearly tells them not to go to the Gentiles, don't go to the Samaritans—that's half Jew and Gentile—but simply go to the house of Israel because the Gentiles were unclean. And yet He shows us by that great example that there came a time when Christ died on the cross, what happened? He received the Gentiles, that which was unholy, ungodly, God now had cleansed and received them. He sets that down that if God is willing to receive you and me before we're saved, and even after we're saved with all the ungodly things we get involved in, who are we not to receive somebody else? It's a great principle. It's a great principle of being Christ-like.

II. God's Progression and Our Hurried Society

As you can probably see in Romans 15, and some of you are pretty good with the Bible, you're getting along with it pretty well, you can probably see that Romans 15 by now follows a progression. We're in Romans 14 too; we've kind of worked through a progression here. These two chapters follow the life journey. I showed you, I think it was the first time we talked about

Romans 14, the life of Abraham and how that his life, like your life and my life, was a journey. But it was a journey of a progression, how he starts out not being able to trust God for anything and then winds up trusting God with everything. It's a great asset of the Bible that you need to see, and it'll really help you put it into perspective because God has a progression for everything He does. It's one of the amazing things of the Bible. I cannot think of one thing that God did that He did not do through some kind of progression.

Now you go back in your Bible and you look at the calling out of the nation of Israel. He calls Israel out in Genesis 11. I don't know if you know what time that is; that'll be 1900 BC. Israel doesn't get established as a nation till 1000 BC. You know what you got there? It took God a progression of 900 years to get Israel from the place where He called them out to the place where they became the nation with Jerusalem being their capital. That doesn't happen until David gets on the throne.

How about Christ coming to the Jew? You go back in your Bible, you'll find prophecies on the coming of Christ that range anywhere from 600 to 1000 years before Christ was born. It took a progression. It was a progressive thing as God moved through the Bible. We talk about the restoration of the nation of Israel, how God is going to come back and restore the nation of Israel. But you know what? Even that is a progression. God put the Jews on a back burner in Acts 8, and here it is, until 2000 years later, and God is getting ready now—you know our chart up there, God in the world events around you—God is getting ready now to restore the nation of Israel. It took 2000 years for that progression. Everything in the Bible is a progression.

You have a Bible in front of you. That Bible tells you and I what we're supposed to do in life and gives us everything that God wants us to know. But I think people think sometimes that the Bible just parachuted down from heaven from God, and somebody found it and started printing it off. No, not at all. You realize that even getting your Bible took a progression? When you look at that thing and you find that when Christ shows up and He begins to do His work and the books began to be written by the men who wrote them, there's a process, a progression of 60 some years to get that Bible complete. Not only that, it took another 1600 years to get that Bible in its final form. Everything is a progression. Everything is.

It's important that you understand how God works. I'll tell you why that is, because we get in a hurry, and there's nothing wrong with getting in a hurry. I'd rather see you be in a hurry than to be like a daze and not care. But the truth of the matter is, I like your hurriedness. I love... Where's Kevin at? Where's my buddy, Kevin? I love you, Kevin. I got to tell this story. Please don't be upset with me. I don't care if you are. We had our men's meeting yesterday, and Kevin's come to that. Kevin, how long have you been saved now? Four months. Well, four months. Kevin's doing a good job, and Jack brought him, and he got saved. We had our men's meeting yesterday, and at the end of the men's meeting, I always have the guys come up and to take teams. We divide them up, Jimmy counts them, and we divide them up and try to put four or five on a team. Well, you know what? The guys came up, and we were short. I needed three more guys, and I said, "I need three more guys." And old Kevin jumped up and started to come up to the deal, and I had to tell him, I said, "Kevin, I'm not sure you're ready to do that just yet, but I really love your spirit." You see, that's what I'm talking about. He wanted to get up there and do something, and I like that. I

like people who want to get ahead of the game, and I like that attitude, but the reality of it is this: you have to walk before you can run. I have no doubt in my mind, Kevin, that you'll be a champion runner for God by the time you get to the point, and it won't take you long. You've been here four months. I guarantee you six months from now, you'll be on fire, and three months after that, you'll be a nuclear explosion. That's good. I'm happy for you, but that's what I look for because we all get in a hurry. But when it comes to God, the thing that you got to realize is that you can't get in a hurry.

Our whole world is that way. I remember when they made the first McDonald's. I remember on the sign it wasn't "87 billion sold"; it was just "one." I live in Cahn, Ohio, and it was up on Tusk. Up on Tusk up there was the first McDonald's. My mom and dad and I, we thought it was the greatest thing in the world to go to a McDonald's. No, but it was the first fast food restaurant you ever had. It was the word, isn't it? Fast food. Our society was changing. Remember when we used to sit around a table and Mom used to make dinner and spend hours making dinner? The June Cleaver type, she wore the dress with the deal on it. We all sat around the family. I remember it in our home. I remember in our home, Dad would come home from work, Mom and me. I'd be out playing. I remember that voice as clear as anything out the back door: "Bobby!" I'm deep. It's one of those things where we sat around the table. Everybody did. I mean, you got to remember on the TV, there wasn't any murder, there wasn't any rape, there wasn't any adultery, there wasn't any flesh. You know what it was? It was Ozzy and Harriet. It was the Cleavers and all that group. It was all the basic things that were very wholesome. But then society was changing, wasn't it? Well, they wanted to introduce something faster. So we got fast food. And then fast food wasn't fast enough, so you had to put a drive-through in the fast food so you could get your fast food faster. And then that wasn't enough. Somebody said, "Well, we have fast food, we have fast food faster, but people are now really different, and they don't want the standard." So the restaurants started saying, "You can have it your way." And then right after that, churches started picking up on that concept. So you could just about go wherever you want to go. Society is geared that way, and that's part of our problem.

I remember when we went to school that the thing that we all hated was new blue jeans because they were real stiff, they were real starchy, and they were real hard to wear and scratchy. Everybody liked that lived-in look. But it took about what, six months of washing? You don't have to do that anymore. Now you can buy blue jeans; they got holes in them wherever you want them. They're already worn out for you. Somewhere on this planet, I want you to know that for you people who pay \$80 for throwaway jeans, somewhere on this planet, I'm looking for them. Somewhere on this planet, there's a bunch of people who are making millions of dollars wearing the jeans that you have on now for six or seven months before you think they're new. I'm telling you. I look at them and I think, and I hear the joke when you're wearing the shirt, "These are my holy jeans." I really don't care. I think they're kind of neat. I got a couple pair myself. You know what? This is a good, but you never notice Charismatics don't ever wear them because the holes keep healing up. If you're a Charismatic, that's not a slam; that's just a joke. I didn't really have it; I just thought about it as it came through here, so I just thought I'd do it.

Anyway, the bottom line is this: we get in a hurry. When it comes to God, you can't get in a hurry. Growth is a process. The church was the same way. It probably took 20 or 30 years for God to fully lay out the concept of the church. People don't really understand that when they read the book of Acts, but it did.

III. Spiritual Growth and the Church's Purpose

Ephesians 4:11-12 are some great verses.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Did you ever analyze verse 11? Did you ever look at that? It says, "And He gave some apostles." There's your first group. The Bible says in Ephesians 2:20 that the church is built on the foundations of the apostles. The next group you find, it says "prophets." You find those in Acts 11:27. Then it says "evangelists." That would be Philip and Paul. And then it says "pastors and teachers." That'd be Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and Priscilla and Aquila, and the rest of the guys who were pastors. Of course, Aquila is Priscilla's husband, but there's a team. That's how it went. It was a progression. Your life and my life have to be the same way.

Verse 12 says, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." You see, "perfecting of the saints." What does that mean? When you come to church here, the progression starts. You decide that this church is for you, and you want to learn the Bible. You want to be a better husband, a better wife, a better mother, a better father. You want to have a better handle on life. You want to just have a better relationship with God. Then there's a process that starts.

The first thing is "perfecting of the saints." What does that mean? It means basically getting out of your life the things that you got to get out so you can begin to build a relationship with God. Then the second thing says in verse 12, "for the work of the ministry." What does that mean? It means that as you perfect yourself, the perfecting yourself is for the work of the ministry. You begin to understand that God saved you for a purpose. God saved you for a reason. And then the third aspect of it is, and this is where we're at right now, isn't it, "for the edifying of the body of Christ." You see, there's a progression. You start by getting your life squared away. You next move into understanding the work of the ministry, what it's all about, why God even saved you to begin with. And then the third step is edifying somebody else, receiving them. That's what we're talking about. That's what we're talking about. And of course, that's the key to the whole thing, isn't it?

That's the way God does things. So I love your enthusiasm. I really do. I want to see you just ripping at the gate to get out. But the bottom line is, whatever you do in life for God, don't get in a hurry. The world gets us in a hurry. Everything around us, we want it now. I think my mom and dad probably waited for about 10 or 15 years after they were married before they bought their

first house. Today we don't do those things. Now we have ways to get it right now, even when we can't afford it. In fact, that's part of the problem. It's got our country financially in the mess that it's in. People bought the loan, got the loan, never read the fine print, and then come to the place where they can't pay for them, all because we get in a hurry.

Yesterday with the guys, we had a great time. We really, I feel, got some things accomplished in our beginning of laying this thing out. What you saw yesterday is exactly what I'm talking about. I explained to you yesterday, as we explained over the last couple of times, that when you come to Saturday morning and you want to get involved in this church and get involved in one of the prayer groups and really figure out what's going on, we kind of score out in three levels.

1. Level one would be the basic entry where you, where you, Bible talks about here, where you would perfect yourself.
2. Level two would be understanding the ministry.
3. Level three is the edification of other people, understanding how that works.

I told you yesterday that my goal is to get an ongoing process throughout this church that never ends. That level ones don't stay level ones; they become level twos. And level twos don't stay level twos; they become level threes. That the process of spiritual growth works in your life. Now I know that everybody grows differently. I don't hold the same standard for one person as I hold for another. What I want to see is progress, not retrograde, but progress in the aspect of spiritual growth. That's the key.

Now look at Ephesians 4 here for a second. I know I put you to Romans 15, but we'll be there in a minute. I'm sorry. Look at Ephesians 4. This is what the process does.

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

Now let's look at that verse because this is the progression here. Look at verse 13. The goal ought to be the unity of the faith. It comes to "we come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." What does that mean? That means the knowledge of understanding who God is, like we saw in Colossians last week. Verse 13 says, "Unto a perfect man." Of course, we become a perfect man, not in sinlessness, but in perfecting ourselves for the ministry because Christ is our perfect model. We saw that last week, didn't we?

Verse 14 says, "that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." Now that's the problem that we all have to solve in our lives: growing up, understanding what the Bible says, knowing not only what you believe, but why you believe it. Coming to the point in your life where you're not tossed to and fro. You go to work, and somebody hears something or somebody says, "Well, how did you see this on the Internet?" And

you get confused because you don't really know what you believe, so you're susceptible to what anybody else believes. The Bible says God doesn't want you that way. He wants you to grow up. He wants you to be no more children in a spiritual sense. He doesn't want you to be tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine.

I found out that probably, and this is a sad thing, but it's probably true. I know it to be true. I could probably take the average Christian that you find today, and I'm not talking about a new Christian. I'm talking about a Christian that's been saved five, 10, 15, 20, 30 years. I could probably take, and some of you could do this too, it just isn't because it's me, but we could probably take somebody that's been saved a long time and have them so confused in a conversation of 20, 30 minutes that they wouldn't even know if they really were saved or not. You know why that is? And that's a sad thing, but you know why that is? It's because they never learned really what happened to them the day they got saved. They probably are saved, but they went to churches all of their life, and they never really found out not only what they believe, but never found out why they believe what they believe. So they know what they are: they're tossed to and fro. Every wind of doctrine. Remember when the Holy Spirit of God came in Acts 2, it came as a mighty rushing what? Wind. That's a false doctrine. That's a false Holy Spirit. The problem with most of God's people, they can't tell the difference between the real thing or the wrong thing. Of course, he goes on and he says, "by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness."

Then he says in verse 15, "speaking the truth in love." We talked about that yesterday. We talked about how hard it is for so many young men who are coming into ministry to make the hard decisions. In the ministry, dealing with people, you're not going to make everybody happy. You're going to have to make some decisions that people aren't going to like. You got to make some decisions that people are not going to be happy with. But the bottom line is you ought to be able to speak the truth in love, lay it on the table, put it out in the Bible. That's where it's at, and that's where it stands. That doesn't mean you do it in a mean way. It doesn't mean that you do it in a bad way. It just means that you have to do it.

Then he says, verse 15, "but speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things." Now, I think that's a great verse because it doesn't say "grow up under him." It says "grow up into him." You know what that means? That means Christ-like. In other words, your life ought to be a progression that you become just like Christ more every day. One of these days, because that progression is in your life, you wake up, you see things the way Christ sees them, you look at things the way Christ looks at them, you understand them the way the Bible lays them out, and you use the Bible principles in everything. Look what it says: "But speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things." I think that's a good one. Not the things you want to grow up into. It doesn't say the things you like. It doesn't say the things you prefer. It doesn't say the things that you're okay with versus the things you're not okay with. It says "grow up unto him in all things." That's Christ-like. That's being like Christ. That's what that great concept is.

IV. Adding to Your Faith: The Progression of Charity

Romans 15 shows us a great truth about our relationship with God. It's a progression of God showing and teaching us. It's a great concept. It's this: when you get saved, life is not over. When

you get saved, your sins may be passed now. When you get saved, your old life may be gone. But it doesn't mean that it's over. It simply means that God has given you a new life, and now it all begins for God. Where the last part of your life was all about you, now the rest of your life needs to be all about Him. That's the way it needs to work. Old things are passed away, and all things become new.

Now, I told you to go to Romans 15. Come back to 2 Peter 1:5. This is a test. I'm seeing how well you can find your books in your Bible. I promise you we're going to get to Romans 15. Look at 2 Peter 1:5. When I talk about a progression, here's a good example of that.

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, look at verse 5, "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith." All right, you see that? Once you get saved, there are some things that you need to add to your faith. You know what that is? That's a progression. In other words, when you got saved, God just didn't want you to stay where you're at. He wants you to add some things. It's part of that progression. It's part of the progression of growing up into Him, being Christ-like. These are all character qualities of Christ. We don't have time to go through them all this morning, but the first one is virtue. It says down there, "add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."

Now look at verse 8. "If these things be in you." See, they're not things that you do. They're things that are in you because you're growing up not unto Him, but you're growing up into Him. So when you're growing up into Him, then these things are in you. I think that's probably the problem with most of God's people. Most people, God's people aren't growing up into Him. They're growing up unto Him. These things aren't in them. They're things that they do when they're convenient to do, and then when they're not convenient, then they don't do them.

He says, "For if these things be in you," I love this word, "and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." There it is. We talked about that last week. It's the reason why we don't forgive. It's the reason why we don't receive. It's the reason why we don't become Christ-like in some situations. We like to pick and choose which one we are. The Bible says we grow up into Him in all things, not the things we want to do. Of course, the reason why we don't is we forget. We become self-righteous. We talked about it last week. We become sanctimonious. We become prideful. We forget the fact that we have made terrible mistakes in our life, and God dealt with us. But you know what? We hold grudges against other people, and it becomes an issue that just becomes a problem. That's what he's talking about here.

So he says virtue. He says knowledge. Knowledge in the sense of Ephesians 4:13, knowledge about Christ. He says temperance. Temperance is balance in your life. He says patience. We know what that is. Godliness, we know what that is. Kindness, we know what that is. But look at the last one. The last one is charity. Do you ever notice that charity is the last thing mentioned in this little list of things? Because this list is a progression. This is the progressive list that you will build in your life as you walk through the progression of building a relationship to become like Christ. You know why charity is the last thing? Because charity is the key to everything in God and Christ. That's why.

You know what the Bible says over there in 1 Timothy 1:5?

Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

Now what does "feigned" mean? "Feigned" means you fake something. "Feigned" means that you fake something. You feign to be something you're not. It means fake. It means to portray one thing when you're really something else. The thing that marks a true Christ-like Christian is the thing that was the end of everything in Christ's life, and it's the word "charity." You know why that is? Because charity, and charity is a word today that has lost its biblical meaning. When we think of charity, we think of Big Brothers Association. "Hey, we're going to be in a neighborhood next week. Do you have any old clothes for us?" We think charity is going down the city in mission tonight. And it is. It is. But that's such a, we've lost the biblical concept of the word "charity." Charity is the fact that in everything that you and I do—forgiving people, receiving people, ministering to people, whatever it is—it's done with the heart of charity because charity always carries with it the designation that it's unconditional. You give charity, there's nothing you want back. That's the mark of Jesus Christ. That is the greatest mark of His character in His life: that He did what He did without any strings attached. He never had an ulterior motive like we do. He never did something wanting something back. He always did it because it was the right thing to do. That's why in this list of things, it comes to the point where the last thing is charity: the place in your life when everything is done unconditionally. Your forgiveness, your love, your receiving people, it becomes unconditional through the concept of charity, just like Christ did with you and me. That's Christ-like. That's a progression we need to have in our lives. That ought to be your goal.

V. Romans 15: The Offering of the Gentiles

Ah, finally. Romans 15. See how this all meshes together here. Romans 15. Finally. Now, in light of what we've just said, let's look at Romans 15:13-18. Today we're going to look at the fifth area of these seven concepts that he talks about, and we'll see how all this stuff meshes together.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed.

Now Father, we do thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We ask You today to take our passage in light of what we've looked at already and laid a good foundation here, helping us in these last few moments remaining to look at this and to understand it in the light of the Word of God in our lives. Help us to be Christ-like. Help us not to be selective in who we receive. Help us not to be selective in the things that we do. But like Christ with charity, receive and do all of the things unconditionally that God has done for us. We'll thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

VI. The Importance of Pauline Epistles and Sound Doctrine

Now I got to deviate from my message here for a moment, wanting to deal with this thing about admonishment because you know my goal is to help you see the Bible. There's something here that you need to see. This really doesn't have anything to do with our stuff, but it's really important in you putting your Bible together. I would commit a crime this morning if I didn't deal with this. The thing I want you to look at first of all, we'll do this very quickly, is look at verse 15 and 16. What I'm about to show you is really key in putting your Bible together.

Now I know around here, we put a lot of emphasis on that. Everything that we do around here is to help you put the Bible together. When you come to this church, we just take for granted you want to become where everything God wants you to be. So I teach along those lines. I don't want to ever miss an opportunity to give you, especially some of you first and second level people, the benefit of understanding a great key to your Bible. You want to remember what I'm about to show you today because really if you're a first or second level, everything else I say today as far as putting your Bible together, this is what you want to remember today.

First of all, Romans 15:15-16 clearly says that Paul was the apostle to the Gentile. That's absolutely paramount when it comes to understanding your Bible. Historically, you're going to find coming down through history—we talked about this when we started our sermon this morning about Christians and Baptists—you're going to find that historically, the real true church has always followed a biblical line. You're going to find that the real true church was not always called a Baptist church. We know that. I'm not suggesting that at all. But you have to see a great concept here that the way this thing breaks down.

Everything in the Bible, we're going to go through this on Thursday night when we start to show you, but everything in your Bible has a natural breakdown. Every book of the Bible has a natural breakdown. The verses and the grammar that it's put together with has a natural breakdown.

They're called commas and semicolons and colons and periods and the paragraph marks. Everything has its breakdown. But the New Testament is by design, the way God set it up, has its own breakdown that you have to follow. It's very important that you understand that because in time, most of you are going to get the Bible down, and it's things like this that's going to help you. So I got to take a moment and lay this thing out to you.

When you look at your New Testament, you're going to find that you have Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the book of Acts. Those are your first five books of the Bible. We're going to keep it very simple. Those five books of the Bible basically are your historical books, or your books on history. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John talks about the first coming of Christ. Acts talks about the transition from the nation of Israel into the church, and you start to see the thing work. Of course, the predominant person in Acts after Acts 7, as you know who it is, Peter. Peter dies at the end of the book of Acts, and then the church age begins to move on from there. So those books are basically historical books. I'm not saying that you can't find great principles and great verses out of there that you can apply to your life. You really can. But basically, for the most part, it's a historical story and account of what God is doing. It's very important to understand that in putting your Bible together.

Then we have another section that is after Paul's section, because I'm going to come back and focus on Paul's section. This section is called the General Epistles. If you have a Bible, it'll say when you get to James and you get to Hebrews and you get to these places that are not written by Paul, right across the top of your Bible, it'll say "The General Epistles." And they're in a general sense. They have a place in your Bible. And then you have the next section would be the book of Revelation itself. The book of Revelation stands by itself. The book of Revelation is kind of like the capstone of the Bible. It goes back and puts everything in perspective and then shows you how the whole thing ends.

But that brings us to the other section that what we call the Pauline Epistles. The Pauline Epistles are very important in your Bible because where the other sections of the Bible, you might be dealing with history. It might be dealing with the nation of Israel. You have to be somewhat careful what you apply to yourself because it may not be written directly to you, even though it has some great stuff for you. When you come to Paul's writings, you're 100% safe. Paul's writing, everything he writes, he writes to the church. Everything he puts in there, he puts in there directly to you for your help. He writes in two formats. Did you ever see it? Some of his books are written to churches. That would be Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians. That would be Galatians, Ephesians. They're written to churches. Ah, but then he has a section of books that are written to individuals. He has 1st and 2nd Timothy. He has Titus. He has Philemon. Those are written to New Testament Christians. So his books are absolutely imperative that you see that the basis of what you and I teach, the basis of what you and I believe, come from the Pauline epistles. That is absolutely important. I'm not saying that it's all not important. Don't misunderstand what I'm saying. I'm saying, but in that Bible, there's a section of books that are written to you that everything he writes is straight into your heart. In some of the books, he'd be writing to you around the Jew and going through the nation of Israel or talking about this and

making a point here that isn't directly to you, but you can apply it. But when you get into these books, everything there is for you.

Now I'm going to make a statement here basically to ask you a question. First, it's going to sound like an arrogant statement. It's not really, not meant to be. But you know why I'll never teach the Bible wrong? That sounds like an arrogant statement. Now I have the ability to be a sinner just like everybody else, and I am a lot of the time, but I'll guarantee you, I'm not saying I'm not above going off the deep end and getting a robe and a pair of little finger cymbals and heading out to the airport. Do you know why I'll never teach the Bible wrong in what we believe? There's all kinds of weird stuff out there.

I had a guy call me last week that's looking to come to our church, and he's going to a church out in Peculiar. That's a good place for this church because this church is very peculiar. We're an independent because we're an independent Baptist church. I don't know what they have in a place called Hell, Michigan. What do you think would be up there? You know there's a place called Hell, Michigan? I don't know what kind of church that would be. But anyway, the bottom line is this. This guy calls me on the phone. Nice kid. In fact, he was at our Memorial Day picnic. Really nice kid. He calls me on the phone and he says, "Hey, Bobby, I'm really struggling with some stuff here." He says, "I'm going to a church." He says, "This church has been here now about nine years." He says, "It's only running about three couples." He says, "People come, but people won't stay." He says, "I'm not getting fed spiritually." He says, "I feel the loyalty to the pastor." But he says, "What do you think could be wrong that a church like this is not growing?" I wanted to be very kind. I wasn't going to. I know the kid that's pastoring the church, and I wasn't going to say anything negative. I mean, that's not my deal. So I tried to talk with him. I said, "Well, you know what? Sometimes guys just don't know how to pastor. I mean, maybe he just doesn't understand how to get the thing going." We talked for a little bit. And then he said this. He said, "Well, I'm glad we're talking." He said, "Let me ask you this." He said, "Because he teaches this." He said, "I want to know what your opinion is on this." He says he teaches from the pulpit that if you have kids—how many have kids under the age of accountability or not having been saved yet? Oh, we got born in that. I mean, we got Noah's ark in there and everything. Where are you? Hey, are you ashamed of him? See all the kids up here today? Well, here was the thought. He's teaching that if you have kids under the age of accountability and the rapture of the church comes, that your kids do not go, and they have to stay and go through the tribulation period. Why are some of you smiling? They have kids. I said when he said that, I said, "Whoa, you just told me why nobody wants to come to that church. You just answered your own question." What young couple is going to go to the church when a pastor teaches from the pulpit that if the rapture comes and your kids are little kids under the age of accountability, Matty, Macy, and Kenzie, that they're going to stay and go through the tribulation period and you go to heaven? Is there any parent that's going to be happy about that? Is there any parent going to say, "Wow, I'm going to join this church?" I was talking to Bob about it, Bob Gregg, when the night had happened, and I told Bob, and we agreed, in all the years of the weird stuff I've heard people teach, I've never heard that taught anywhere. That is a new one for me. I can't even imagine. I wouldn't even, if I believed that, I wouldn't tell you. I just believe we all get to heaven. See, let

the Lord deal with it. I ain't telling you that. You look at me and say, "Where's the kids?" And I'll say, "I'll talk to them." I wouldn't even tell you that. That's rough.

Now, I don't even know where you get that from. I mean, I know, I can't even remotely think in the Bible where you'd find that. I mean, I don't know. I mean, I shake it upside. I don't know where it's at in there. You got all kinds of weird stuff. You got people that teach baptism for salvation. You got people that teach that the church is going through the tribulation period. You got people teaching that the Jews over in Israel right now are not the real Jews. That they're over here in you and me, hidden in the Gentiles. They call that Armstrongism, like 30, 40 years ago.

Now, I'm going to tell you something. You know why that if I stay on course that I'll never teach you heresy or won't have the ability to teach you heresy? I'm going to tell you why. It's not an arrogant statement. It's a true statement. You know why? Because whatever I teach you, whatever I teach you, and when I give you, you can trace back to 1900 years of the true church believing it. You think I just make all this stuff up? Hey, I was taught by the boys that were taught by the boys that were taught by the boys, and that thing runs back in a true line all the way back. Everything I teach you can be substantiated in history. This is the importance of church history. You're learning that on Tuesday night. Everything I teach you isn't Bob Alexander's pet theory. It isn't this or it's that. It can be substantiated that the church, the true church of Jesus Christ, believed these doctrines all the way back through the Bible. So when I hear somebody get up and talk about Calvinism, I know he's a bird brain. Calvinism didn't start till 1500 with Calvin. 1500 years after Christ died. Nobody believed that. No, no, no, no. What you've got to believe about the Bible needs to have a pedigree, a paper trail all the way back to where it first started. It's just that simple.

Now I just told you that we put the emphasis on our preaching on the Pauline writings. Back around 500 or 600, you had a group. They were called heretics. You know why they were called heretics? They called them Paulicians. You know why they were called Paulicians and labeled heretics by the Roman Catholic Church? You know why they were called Paulicians? Because they were a group of people who rejected the Catholic Church teaching that Peter was the pope and realized that they needed to put what they really believed in the Pauline epistles because that's where the bedrock of church faith was. So they called them Paulicians. See? I mean, do you think I just stay up late at night and get my hair off like a crazy scientist? I don't have any hair. But get up in the middle of the night and think, hey, this stuff has to go back. It has to be documented. That's the difference of knowing why you believe what you believe. That's why as long as you stick with that, you'll never teach the Bible wrong.

Hear me talk about the fact that, and this is over some of your heads, but we talk about the gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. In theological circuits, it's called the gap theory. There ain't no theory to it. It's the gap fact. Somebody sent me a paper here a while back of some dingbat pastor that tried to refute the thing. His argument was absolutely ludicrous. But I didn't have to read it because you know what? 150 AD, 150 years after Christ's death, 150 AD, there was a group called the Manichaeans who were persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church. Why? Because they believed there was a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. I mean, what I believe goes back. I'm sorry if you don't know that. I don't know where you wasted most of your life to figure these

things out. But I'm telling you, you have to not only know what you believe, but have to know why you believe it. That's a problem today. It starts with understanding how these things figure the thing out. I mean, it's just that simple.

Somebody says, "Why does your church use the King James Bible?" Because that was the only Bible the true church used for 1,900 years. That's why. I mean, people don't understand. I'm not mad at them because they don't understand. But don't get mad at me because I know where it comes from, and I know what I'm supposed to believe. I just teach it to you. I hope someday when I'm dead and gone, you'll teach it to somebody else. Because the guy that taught me and taught him and somebody taught him, and that's the process. In other words, I believe and teach not what Bob Alexander wants to believe and teach. I believe it because it goes back and can be a proven fact in 1,900 years all the way back to Acts 11 in the first century. We're the first called Christians. See, part of this process is knowing, like I said, not only why, but what you believe. That's why the Bible says you're to grow up to be no more children. If you don't get tossed to and fro. Instead of you getting tossed to and fro when somebody teaches you some bad doctrine, you got to take them by the scruff of the neck and toss them to and fro. In Jesus' name and love. Carried about by every wind of doctrine. Hey, I don't care where you're at today. You may have walked into this church for the first time. You may be coming a couple of weeks or a couple of months, and you may say in your heart, "I want to learn the Bible." Hey, whenever you're ready to clear off a spot and say, "I am done with this stuff. I am going to get it the way God wants me to have it and learn it." God's ready to do business with you. It's that simple, but it's very important that you understand why Paul's books are so crucial. I mean, you've seen that, I hope, in the book of Romans.

VII. Understanding Admonishment

Now, once we got that settled out of the way, let's go back and look at verse 14 and look at this, what he says here. Let's look at 14 again.

And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

Now there are three things here. You see them? Let's talk about these three things for a little bit. The first thing he says is "full of goodness." Now let me define that for you in the Bible. I'm sure most of you don't know this. Goodness in the Bible will always be a reference to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the only goodness there is. We used to hear your old grandma and your mom talk about it when they say, "My goodness." You want to translate that? That would be "my Jesus." Somebody says, "Goodness gracious." Let me translate that for you: "God's grace." See how it works? The definitive passages on those will be Psalms 27:13, Psalms 33:5, and Psalms 31:19. Those will be the passages in the book of Psalms that will define for you that goodness is Jesus Christ. So Jesus Christ is God's goodness. So when the Bible says that we're supposed to be full of goodness, that simply means that we're supposed to be, here it comes again, Christ-like, full of Christ. There is no goodness outside of Jesus Christ. You might be a good person. That's good. But at the great white throne judgment, if you're unsaved and you're just a good person, you know what they're going to do. God's going to take you and put you in this hand, and Jesus

Christ in this hand is going to weigh out your goodness versus His goodness. You're going to find out that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, no matter how good you are. You see, I may be a good guy before I was saved. You may be a good guy before you were saved. But the Bible says that all of our righteousness is a filthy rag in the sight of God. The thing that you needed and I needed and I got and most of you got was the fact that you got rid of your goodness and you got God's goodness. That's Jesus Christ. Now the Bible says that you're to be full of that goodness.

I look at the next thing: "filled with all knowledge." Now that's knowledge in particular there. That's not knowledge in a broad sense. That's knowledge of the way we've looked at it in Colossians 1 last week and in Ephesians 4:13 and just a few moments ago: that's filled with all knowledge, knowledge of Jesus Christ, who He is. Of course, you can't be like Him till you know who He is.

Then the third thing, and this will be the fifth one we're going to talk about. This will be really our goal today. "able also to admonish one another." This is the concept that I want to take a few moments and talk to you about. In the Bible, the word "admonish" carries a number of different meanings to it. Most of them are defined by the verses you find them in. We don't have time to go through all of them, but I've got a couple of them here for you. Basically, when you go through the Bible, you're going to find that the word "admonish" is not a hard rebuke. Admonish is something that we need to do to each other, but it has various forms and various forms that we need to apply.

- It deals with in a sense of mildly reproving somebody, not harshly, but mildly reproving somebody.
- It's used in a connotation of giving somebody advice. Good advice. Biblical advice.
- It's used in the context of warning people.
- It's used in a context of instructing people.
- It's used in a context of counsel you give to people.
- It's used in a context of directing people.
- It's given a context of giving instructions in duty to people.

A great example of this, and most of you already know this because we've talked about it many, many times, but I personally, for me, I think it's one of the greatest concepts in the Bible about the Bible for you and for me. The greatest example of this is the Bible itself and the Bible claiming for what it does for us. Over in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, here's the greatest example I know of what the Bible does in the form of admonishment, and you find all of the forms here. This is the only two verses I know that really define it and define it in its entirety of all of its concepts. You'll find different verses where it uses the word "admonition" will be a different thing, but this is the only passage I know that covers the whole realm and the whole spectrum of it. It's a very familiar verse.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

It simply says that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable." Then it lists four things that it is profitable for. The first thing is "for doctrine." The second thing is "for reproof." The third thing is "for correction," and the fourth thing is "for instruction in righteousness." Then in verse 17, it says this after he says what it's for, it tells you what it accomplishes. It says in verse 17, "that the man of God may be perfect." Now that's not sinless perfection. It says "that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." It doesn't say that the Bible makes you perfect, but it does say that the Bible perfects you for all the good works that God wants you. Remember the thing back there in Ephesians, "for the work of the ministry."

Now let me show you the four things the Bible does, and here lies the biblical definition of the word "admonish" or "admonishment."

4. The first thing it says, the Bible is profitable for you. And the first thing it says there that is profitable is "for doctrine." Now that's very important because the Bible is a book that shows you what's right, and it's very important. I try to tell you all the time, the Bible is the only standard that you have that you can trust. Your teacher may say that was the right thing to do. Your mom and dad may say you did the right thing. But at the end of the day, and I'm not taking that away from them, but the bottom line, the only book that really defines what right is, is the Bible. I mean, Joe Ligurski, who was a great gangster one time, who had a buddy who killed somebody that was his enemy, went over to him and said, "You know, boy, I'll tell you what, you did the right thing because he was giving us problems." See, that's the wrong kind of right. But everybody's got their own definition of right. The Bible gives you God's definition of right. And it's called doctrine. Doctrine shows you what's right.
5. Then the second thing he talks about there is "reproof." You see, once the Bible shows you what's right, then the Bible always contrasts itself by showing you what's wrong. Don't you do that with your kids? Don't you teach your kids the concept of what's right and what's wrong? Well, if you know how to do that, how much more can God not be able to do that? So God takes the Bible, and by the Bible, He teaches us what is right, and then He reproofs and He shows what's wrong. So the Bible shows us what's right. The Bible shows us what's wrong.
6. Then the third thing is "correction." See, the Bible goes farther than just telling you what's right and what's wrong because in the concept of correction, the Bible shows you how to fix what's wrong. That's the whole key of the Bible. That's what Sunday morning preaching is about. That's what reading your Bible is about. The Holy Spirit of God shows you through conviction of the Holy Spirit of God what's right in the Bible and what's wrong in our lives. And then He leads us to the way that we can correct it. See, I think that's really all that it really is.
7. And then the fourth thing is an incredible thing too. It says "instruction in righteousness." You see, the Bible shows you what's right. The Bible shows you what's wrong. The Bible shows you how to fix it. And then you know what it does? It shows you how to keep it fixed. Instructions in righteousness.

Now that's the Bible term or definition of admonishment, or to admonish. The Bible admonishes you with what's right. It instructs you. It gives you everything you need. The Bible admonishes you into what's wrong. The Bible admonishes you how to fix what's wrong. And then it admonishes you how to keep it fixed. That's what the Bible does.

We're also told in 1 Corinthians 10:11, and this is another great one, that the things in the Old Testament, they happen for a reason, the Bible says. In other words, the story in the Bible in the Old Testament—Adam and Eve, Noah, Cain and Abel, Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, all of the story, David and Goliath, Saul and the witch at Endor—all of those stories, the Bible says that they are for our ensamples. And then it goes on to say that they are written in the Bible for our admonition. Now what does that mean? That means you read those stories in the Bible when you see how people got caught up in sin. You take a guy like Samson, you take a guy like Saul, you take a guy like Abraham, you take a guy like Job, you take a guy like Moses, you take a guy like Ahab, take a lady like Jezebel—she was no lady—take Jezebel, and you'll find out everything about them in light of what they did wrong, what they did right, and you learn and you get admonished by that. I mean, those things will warn you, they'll advise you, they'll instruct you, they'll direct you, they'll do everything that they need to do.

Ephesians 6:4. Here's a good one. This is a good one for you parents and you fathers today. Today's Father's Day. Here's the verse. I knew we'd get Father's Day in here someplace.

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonishment of the Lord.

You know, most fathers are, sadly to say, most fathers provoke their children. I deal with it all the time. You know where you get, and I caution people on this, that you know you grow up and maybe you have a bad marriage and you get a divorce, and maybe you have two kids, and you marry somebody else, and he's got two kids or one kid, and it's always a problem. Paul tells you in 1 Corinthians 7 that if you follow yourself in that category, that you're going to have problems in the flesh because I found this to be true, and it happens. It's just the way it is. Doesn't mean you can't fix it. It just means you got to be aware of it. I've seen in every situation where, you know, the dad marries the woman, but he doesn't, in his mind, marry the kids. There's a tag along with a baggage, and you know, she marries the guy because she loves the guy. But you know what, and she may have an easier time accepting the kids than guys do, it's vice versa, but they don't understand the concept that when you're marrying a person, you're taking with them whatever comes in, whatever kids they have. Of course, that causes problems because if you don't have an understanding of how to admonish them and bring them up in the Lord, you know what happens. You grew up in a family where it's her kids and your kids, and the moment they sense that among you two, you know what they do. The kids ain't dumb. They'll, you give them a crack, they'll drive a wedge, you get an 18-wheeler through it. They'll use both ends against the middle, and they'll pitch you against each other. That's the way it works. That's why most fathers provoke their children, and the problem their children have growing up in their family is because the fathers provoke that. I don't mean, I'm not saying they get up at night and say, "Okay, how can I make life worse for him tomorrow?" It just happens because you don't understand what it means to bring your kids up and admonish them in the Lord.

I've had, I've had, I tell this to people all the time. Last year I had a couple that were not going to our church, and they come in and talk to me, and they had the same situation, a very bad situation. To my knowledge, it never really got worked out, but he had married a woman, and he had a kid or two kids, I can't remember. She had a couple of kids, and they were married now, and they were just having hell on earth. His question to me was, "I don't know how you deal with this because, you know what, I can't control them, I can't deal with them, I can't discipline them because I'm not their biological father." I said, "So I'm really going to clear off a spot, plant the flag, and say, 'You know what, this house belongs to God. I know whom others may serve, but for me and my house, we serve the Lord.'" And you take that stand, and then you're consistent with that stand, and then you and your wife, you get a consistency together that you look at these things, and you be smarter than the kids. That's really all that it takes. It takes two parents growing up and being smarter than the problem and smarter than the kids.

He said, "Well, they're not my biological kid." You know what I said? I said, "You need to come to church Sunday." He never did. I said, "I want to introduce you to something. I want to show you a concept." I said, "I probably have in our church right now this morning, I probably have, oh, I don't know, 30 or 40 guys and maybe 30 or 40 gals that you've already wished me today, 'Happy Father's Day' as your spiritual father." It was a thing. I've gotten cards from people, and I'm not even your biological father. I don't want any money in them either. Not what bothers me. I told him this. I said, "You know what? I have a bunch of people in my church that I am not their biological fathers, but I have more influence in their life than their very own biological father because the key is, and you're not seeing this, the key is it doesn't matter if you're not their biological father as long as you become their spiritual father." That's the key. That's the key. That's the key. It's something that you, but that's what it means when it says, "bring up your children in the admonition of the Lord." It simply means understanding and being smarter than the problem because if you don't, and you just try to do it the old way where that's your kids and these are my kids, and they're going to fight back and forth, then you're going to provoke them all the time. Your job is not to provoke them. Your job is to admonish them. Your situation may be way extended down the line. But you know what? I'm going to tell you, I have never found a situation in all the years I've been in ministry. I have never found a situation that could not be handled right. The problem is that it goes so long that people don't want to handle it right.

I mean, I don't know what to do. I mean, you know what? I've known husbands that are ruled by their wives. Their wife tells them what to do, and they would love to come to this church and come and be involved in a church, and their wife says, "We know that church is dumb. I ain't going." And you know, after a while, he doesn't come anymore. I mean, I've seen it all the time. It happens all the time. Men are not in charge of their wives, and for whatever reason, and the bottom line is, as long as that thing stays that way, and you don't clear off a spot, and you don't say, "You know what, I am the spiritual head of this home," and then be consistent with it. Now she may laugh at you the first time you say that and say, "Oh yeah, you're the spiritual head of the home. Oh yeah." But if she sees the consistency and you keep doing what's right by the admonishment of it, it takes a lot of courage to do some things when it goes so long that it's really hard. The longer, I've told you many, many times, the longer you let something go without

dealing with it, the harder it becomes to deal with it. But that doesn't mean it's not right to deal with it.

Now look at the next thing. Here's how it's used in Colossians 3:16. This is a good one.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Now there's one about music. Music needs to admonish you. I've asked this over the years. Look down here, it says verse 16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." See that thing. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms." You know what the basis for music should be? It should be the word of God, the Bible doctrine in your heart. Years ago, they had a church I was at, they were going to hire a music director. I don't know why you'd ever want to hire a music director, but we had one, and they brought this hotshot kid in that was just a young guy. Nice kid. But just typical. So they said, "Take him out and run him around the racetrack and see what he's got." So I took him and his wife out to dinner, and I was very nice, but my job was to probe him to find out if he was going to fit in or not. I got to be honest with you, I'm not an easy guy to impress. There are certain things that I look for in people, and if I don't see them, I'm unimpressed. I mean, that's just the way I am. You say, "Well, I'm unimpressed with you." I understand. I'm unimpressed with myself sometimes. But anyway, but I am dressing better. Am I not? Anyway, I get a conviction by my own preaching. You see that thing works for me.

Anyway, the bottom line is this. We've been out to lunch, and I'm asking him nice questions. I'm just kind of working into it. I already believe that when you sing, that it ought to be based on the Word of God that's in your heart. You notice we sing the old songs and the old hymns. You know why? Because they were written in a period of time when the Bible was king, and everybody, and they got bought, they drip with Bible doctrine. I mean, you go into most places and close your eyes when they're singing. I've never gotten into the, to that, when you go to a church and before they start the service, the lights go down and smoke comes out of the altar. And then the choreography of the lights, you know, and then the music comes up, and you've got a praise band over here and a prayer band over here, and everybody's getting you ready for the preaching of the Word of God. I don't know how that would get me ready to go out and get drunk. I mean, I don't know how that gets anybody ready for anything. Now I'm a stick in the mud. I know that. You know, I'm old, I'm a dinosaur. I understand that. But the bottom line is simply that doesn't change the fact that you can close your eyes in most churches, and you could be in a bar. I heard a Christian song one time when the lady was just squalling at the top of her lungs, "I love him, I love him, I love him, I love him, I love him." Did you ever see the movie *Sister Act*? Now that's a great example because those nuns, and they were good. I liked them. I mean, I thought, I mean, I like the movie. I'm sorry. I just know, I mean, I'm not Catholic, and I'm not the pope, but I like the movie. I thought it was cute, thought it was neat, but it was a great example. If you watch down the end when they're performing for the Pope, the song that they sang, that is a worldly song that fit right into what they were doing. "I love him, I love him, I love him," and here we go. "There we go. The follow, follow man." That's all. I mean, it wasn't, you could sing that, and there's no name in it. That's the way most Christian songs are. You close your eyes, and

"I love you, I love you, I love you. Oh, I love you, I love you, my love you. What your sweet lips a little closer to the phone." Now that, now you know what you got with that. See, "I love you, I love you, I love you." I do that when I walk into my garage, and I say, "I love you, I love him, I love him." I got two labs to come over and jump in my lap. They think I'm talking about them. They can't even figure it out. No. I have no idea what that point was that I was going to say to you about this. Why I got it. I got it. I got it. You see, the source of your music when you sing or you perform or whatever it is, it ought to be the Bible doctrine that you have in your heart, and you admonish people. People get up and sing, and they don't even understand where the definitive passage is on the Bible, and back there in, I think it's 1 Samuel 16, back there that defines what music even does for you. Somebody get up and sing a song and don't even know the definitive verse in the Bible that says what it's supposed to do. That's, that's, that's the way you're to see in Christianity. I mean, I tell you when we started that I try to do things based on the Bible. Now don't get mad at me because I know what the Bible says about things. I spent 40 years of my life coming through it. That's not my fault that I just want to build something based on the book. I just, I don't know. I don't know where I got the idea. I just thought that was the right thing to do.

Now there's another one in 1 Thessalonians 5:12.

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

It says, "wherefore comfort yourself together and edify one another and we beseech you brethren to know them that labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake and be at peace among yourself." Now you know what that one says? That one says take comfort in the fact that somebody who may be over you in a church, somebody a pastor or deacon or somebody that you may be working in their ministry under my ministry, whatever, that you thank God for those people that God puts in your life that help you and keep you accountable and teach you the Bible. They admonish you. The Bible says you should esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. You know why? Because somebody cares enough to take out of their busy time to share with you, to sit down, to help you get where you want to get. That's why they admonish you.

Here's another good one. Look at 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15. This is foreign today.

And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

You know what you got here? This is a great one. This is so foreign today to most churches. You know what that Bible says? That Bible says you've got somebody who does something in the church that becomes an issue, becomes a problem, and that person won't get right and won't deal with it. The Bible says that you do. I mean, this is totally foreign today. The Bible says that you do well to have no company with him. But look at that. What is the reason for that? Because you

don't like him? No, it's a biblical reason. "That he may be ashamed of what he did." You know what people do when they do something wrong and they don't want to do what's right? They look through a church to find people who will side with them so they don't have to get right. Now if you don't know that's true, you better go back. We've got a thing called discipleship lessons. That's what human nature does. Birds of a feather flock together. We talked about it yesterday. I talked to you guys about making a hard decision sometimes that aren't always the popular decision. The first thing I do when I get out of fellowship and don't want to get right, I look for somebody else who's as big a mess as I am. And I take comfort in that.

Let me tell you something. If you have a situation where you've got to deal with it, and everybody in that church says, "You know what, we love you, but you were wrong in what you did," and they don't find any sympathy, you know what that does? It makes them feel ashamed because they don't find any sympathy because the church is supposed to be one mind and one heart and like-minded. Now the purpose is not to hurt him. Look at this. This is the counseling principle. But it's so foreign in churches today because nobody wants to do it. I told you yesterday, most people will not take a stand when it involves their friends. Don't ever let any friendship, relationship, or whatever in this world stand between you and what the Bible says is right to do. I don't know what to tell you, man. My advice to you, if you don't like that, good, Hobby Lobby's right down the road. They sell X-Acto knives. You know what an X-Acto knife is? It's a knife that you can exactly cut out that verse because you don't want to believe it. What I call me X-Acto. "If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him." Why? Because you don't like him? Because you want to hurt him? No, "that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy." Don't get on Facebook and tell all nasty things about him. Don't get on MySpace or up here or whatever it is and put it on there, or all the stuff that is nasty. The Bible said don't let, it's okay if he wants to count you as his enemy. Don't count him as yours because the bottom line in every situation in a church is what again? Restoration and receive them. But sometimes you have to make the hard choice. We just can't make it today. I mean, that's all there is to it. You can't do it. We don't see the value in breaking off a relationship with people who do wrong. So God, the Holy Spirit of God, can use that to convict them because when they find comfort in somebody else, they ain't going to do what's right. Who would? I mean, if you have your kids and you deal with your kids, and your kid does something wrong, and you as the dad or the mother, you take that kid and you yell at that kid and deal with that kid and hold that kid accountable, and that kid starts to cry and whine all over the place, and you say, "That's the way it is. We're not going to have it." And then as soon as you walk out of the room, he runs over to the mother, and the mother says, "Oh, that's okay. That's okay. Your daddy don't understand. He's such a mean daddy, isn't he?" Is that going to work for you? I'm looking for a yes or no. Is that going to work for you? Thank you very much. Called English language. You ever notice how unchristian Christians are in their Christianity sometimes?

VIII. The Church as God's Living Sacrifice

Now look at verse 16. This is the killer here.

That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

Now ladies and gentlemen, I don't know. This is a good place to stop as I know. I don't really care if you heard anything else I said today, but boy, you better leave with this one on your heart. This is a great concept to close on. Just like everything else we've looked at today, what a foreign verse. He says, look at it again, "that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." You see what that thing is saying? That says that you and me as the church, as Gentiles, you and me are Christ's offering to God.

I remember years ago, and I was just right back with the Lord, we had a missionary from Africa that came to our church back in Ohio. He told the story that he worked in a very poor thing, and they didn't have a lot of money. When he passed their offering, they got chickens, ducks, and things, and corn, and all of that. There was actually one to build a church building, and there were actually people in that church that loved God and the Word of God so much that they were putting in their wedding rings because they thought that much of having a house for God because they didn't have one. He said there was a little girl that came to church every week. She was about 12 or 15 years old, just a young gal, and she didn't have anything. She already didn't have any clothes. She lived in a family that lived in a little smaller hut down the road, and she never missed church, never missed the time that was there. She sat over there and she cried because when they took up the offering, she didn't have anything to give. He said they laid down what they did back then. We don't do it here. Some churches do do this. They bring it up, and when they pick up the offerings, they place the offerings right on the floor in front of the pulpit. You know that because that's their symbolism of giving it to God. He said, "You know what that little girl did?" He said, "You know what that little girl did?" She walked up and she stepped in that offering plate, and she stood in an offering plate. She looked up at me as the missionary and she says, "Pastor, missionary, I don't have anything to give. So I'm going to give myself." And she stepped in that offering plate.

Now you know what that little girl understood? She showed her stuff, something that we don't understand. You see, we're supposed to be Christ's sacrifice to God, offered up on the altar of ministry. This is why the Bible says in Romans 8:36, that Paul says,

For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Sacrificial lambs. Why? Romans 6:3 talks about we're baptized into Jesus' death. Even that pictures His death, burial, and resurrection. What a concept. On the cross, God offered up His body for you and for me. Listen to me. On that cross, God offered up His body for you and for me. Now Christ offers up to God His body, you and me, the body of Christ, to God the Father for Him.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

You and I are to be God's living sacrifice. He says there that "if I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable." You know what he did? When God took His Son, He offered Him up on the cross. When He came out of that tomb and went back to heaven and started the church, you know what Jesus Christ did? He offered up His body, the church, to God. Some of us think that's an unreasonable request based on what God has done for us. Ever notice how unchristian Christians are in their Christianity? Christ-like, being like Christ, following the principles of the Word of God in everything that you do. Romans 14 and Romans 15, two of the greatest chapters you'll ever get into in your life on how we are to deal with each other as the body of Christ and what God expects of us. Next week we'll finish up the last two, and we'll move into chapter 16.

Let's pray. Father, we do thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We do love You. We thank You, Father, for everything that You've done for us and You've given us. Lord, we thank You for these two chapters. From my own personal life, it's just been incredible. We become so unchristian in our Christianity. We feign Christ-like, but unfortunately, Christ-like at the end of the day is still being like Christ in our attitude, in our actions, and everything that we do. Father, we thank You today for this church. I thank You for the men and women. I thank You for yesterday. I thank You for the men that I really believe we began to take this ministry apart piece by piece, bolt by bolt, and show them the cause and the effect of everything of what happens in this ministry. We talked about the hard decisions that have to be made, that how the ministry is like an iceberg, that only one percent is above the surface, but underneath of it is a massive thing that most people never see. For these men and women to learn ministry and to handle this church, they need to understand that. They need to be made aware. They need to be admonished of what lies out there and how they deal with it. Pray for the ladies next week that we also can bring those through, show them and give them, and that the ladies of this church, as they always have, will stand up and be responsive to the principles of the Word of God. Now we bless Bev and Diane's family this week. May our prayers be with them. May we pray that in everything that goes on tonight and tomorrow and Tuesday, be for Your honor and glory. We thank You for the fact that we had a chance to talk with Margaret and know for sure that she's with the Lord. We love You. We thank You for all that You do. Thank You for the sweet spirit of our ladies that yesterday when we came down here, Lord, that those couple of ladies fixed up everything and put on the board "Happy Father's Day" and had George juice and all the food and everything that they did for the fathers of this church. Lord, that is the kind of attitude of heart that I'm talking about, that people would go the extra mile to be there to help and do the right thing. Thank You, Father. We pray, Father, that the rest of this day bless the mission and then throughout the week and all the things that need to be done. We'll thank You in praise in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

Now please take time on your way out to sign up, get those tickets out of the way as quickly as possible. We've got to figure that all up tomorrow. Please do that. Take time to sign up for Anniversary Sunday. You're going to be baptized or what you're going to bring. God bless you. You're dismissed.