

# Romans 14-15

Sunday 6/27/2010

Maybe you can better understand now, and I told you this before we ever got into Romans 14 and 15. In fact, I prepared you for it months before we ever got here. Maybe you can better see and understand what I told you before we entered these chapters: that these two chapters, without a doubt, are two of the greatest chapters in the book of Romans, if not the whole Bible. They really focus on what you and I are supposed to be.

Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles. We saw that last week. I told you in that study that he is responsible for everything that we have today in the Gentile church. We call it our church, Christianity. These two chapters really define for us who we are. We all like to pretend we are something we are not. We all like to wear our spiritual mask. We all like to put on our spiritual makeup and our spiritual clothes that we try to mask who we really are.

I will tell you what, the book of Romans 14 and 15 has been good for me personally. I hope that you can say it has been good for you because it strips us of the mask. It makes us really understand what it means to be Christ-like. We are like everybody else on this planet; we get a higher opinion of ourselves than we really should. We begin to think that the rules do not apply to us, but they apply to everybody else. We all fall into that trap. That is why places like Romans 14 and 15 really strip us bare and show us exactly not only what we are, but show us and define for us a single term that we talk about all the time, but most of the time we do not understand: being Christ-like, being like Christ in everything that we do.

There was so much in here that before we close this chapter, we are going to talk about putting notes in your Bible. We are going to cover the whole gamut. I think I have five basic areas that you need to learn how to do it. It will make your Bible start to come into focus for you. What it will do is, all the information you get, you will not be losing anything. It will all be focused and be able to put it in a category that will be able to help you.

I want to go through some of the major points that we looked at in these two chapters because I want to make sure that you have these in your notes, because these need to be put into your Bible. You need to pretty much dissect Romans 14 and 15 and get a little theme about it in there, and then get the key points on it that you can always go back and study. It is a great little outline. If you are discipling somebody, it is a great outline to use. If you are teaching somebody the Bible, it is a great outline to use. It works just about in every scenario.

## I. Recap of Romans 14: Principles for Mature Christians

You remember we started in Romans 14. I talked about the theme of Romans 14. The theme of Romans 14 is basically you and I as mature Christians dealing with younger Christians. The Bible calls them weaker Christians. They are only weak in the sense that maybe they have not come along as far as you and I have in the Bible, so they do not have the benefit of knowing some of the things that you and I know.

*Romans 14:1*

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

We talked about the aspect of doubtful disputation. What does that mean? We saw that it means that you have people in every church and every ministry that have not got to the place spiritually yet that we have, and they do not have maybe the grace that you and I should have. So they may get hung up on something in the Bible that to them is a big deal, but to you and me should be a no-brainer, not a big deal. What it is saying basically is, and the theme of this chapter was, that we are not to get into arguments with younger Christians over stuff that really does not matter.

If you are a young Christian and you believe that something that is mundane and really is not a doctrine issue, that is fine. If you come to me and you say, "Well, I do not believe in the rapture of the church," or "I do not believe in the visible return of Christ," that is an issue that you have to understand and deal with. These are two different concepts here. We talked about learning to choose your battles.

In the passage here, he is talking about how it is okay to use as food and holy days. A younger Christian sometimes, one guy here was a vegetarian, and he thought that eating meat and red meat and that stuff was not good spiritually. The other older Christian, he knows that it is okay to eat. Of course, you find a lot of people like that today. You find dietist Christians that think there is a Christian diet. Yet we learn from that that the Bible says that whatever you have grace and faith to eat and receive and give thanks for, it is okay. God has cleansed it. That does not mean that you are not careful with what you eat and you do not eat the right kind of stuff. But at the same time, it does not mean that there is a Christian diet out there that you should follow. I think there are a lot of good principles in the Bible that talk about good eating, and there are reasons for everything in the Bible. But you know that that is not really an issue.

We looked at holy days. We talked about the fact that for a Christian, a New Testament Christian, there are no holy days. Every day is a day that you walk out to serve God and be what God wants you to be. There are no special holy days like there were in the Old Testament. But sometimes you are going to find people who want to think that Sunday is the most special day of the week because that is the day they go to church. That is okay. They will grow up in time and realize that you ought to go to church every day, if not in the physical building, at least in your heart. They will come into that. Those are not things you want to fight over.

Then we saw some absolutely incredible great principles that you should have down.

### ➤ Not Living to Oneself

We saw the great principle of Romans 14:7-8.

*Romans 14:7-8*

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

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

We talked about the simple concept that we all forget: there is always somebody watching our lives. Your job in life is to carry the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is an interesting verse back in the Bible in the Ten Commandments that I have always thought was misused. The Bible simply says back there that we are not to take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

*Exodus 20:7*

*Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*

When we think of that in the terms that we live in, we think of that in the terms of cursing, taking God's name in vain as a curse word. That is definitely wrong, and I am not saying that is not applicable to that, but I think beyond that is that if you are saved here this morning and you are a Christian, the moment you got saved, you took God's name and you wear that name. Wherever you go, people see you and they see you as a Christian. The question is, if you have taken God's name, have you taken it in vain? What are you doing with it?

The Bible says that none of us liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself. There is always somebody watching your life. That was one of the greatest principles that ever hit me as a young man growing up: the simple fact that somebody is always watching our lives. Most of the time, we are not aware of that. There is a thing that you get into your life in time as you grow. I call it God consciousness, and somebody else may call it something else, but to me that is what it has always been. God consciousness is simply the fact that you are always conscious of your presence in relationship to the Word of God and God. You are always looking for those things that are very important in your life. One of them would be the fact that wherever you go, whatever you do, think before you speak, look before you leap, watch where you are going and what you are doing because there is somebody always watching your life.

How many times in my life, and I am sure this is true in most of your lives, has somebody come up to you at work and they had an issue in their life or a problem in their life? Maybe you have never said two words to this person. Maybe they have never seen you read your Bible, but they have come up to you and they tell you that they know that you are a Christian, and they lay out their problem and they ask you to pray for them. That is the greatest single evidence that people are always watching your life. If you are a Christian, you cannot hide it. If you are a bad Christian, you cannot hide it. People watch and people see, and it is so important to understand that: the concept that our life is not our own to do with it what we please.

### ➤ Standing Before the Judgment Seat of Christ

Then we looked at another principle in Romans 14:10.

*Romans 14:10*

*But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*

We took three or four weeks on this one, and we really went through every aspect of the judgment seat of Christ. We do that on a regular basis around here simply because that needs to

be always kept before you. If there is any one single thing as a child of God, you and I need to stay focused on, it is the fact that someday you and I are going to give an account and stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We talked about the simple little format: sinner, son, and servant, how that it kind of lays out the whole concept in an easy format. We went through Job 26, and I talked about the question that God is going to even ask at the judgment seat of Christ. We looked at the definitive passage of the judgment seat of Christ, and you had to have these marked in your Bible: 1 Corinthians 3 and 2 Corinthians 5. They had to be clearly marked as definitive passages, referring them back one to the other.

### ➤ Nothing Unclean of Itself

Then we looked at Romans 14:14 and 17 with another great principle.

*Romans 14:14*

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

*Romans 14:17*

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

It says nothing is unclean of itself, but if a young Christian does not see that, then you know that it is not unclean. You do not destroy the younger Christian over something that makes no sense or has nothing or winds up hurting the work of God. We talked about the aspect of discernment and discretion. Discernment and discretion in its basic form in dealing with people is basically being smarter than the problem, keeping your own personal agenda out of it, and just looking for God to get the honor and glory out of it, and being smarter than the situation that you are in.

### ➤ Let Not Your Good Be Evil Spoken Of

Then we looked at Romans 14:16.

*Romans 14:16*

*Let not then your good be evil spoken of:*

We learned another great aspect of our Christian life, and that was the concept of our liberty in Christ Jesus. I took you to 1 Corinthians 10:23 and 1 Corinthians 6:12. Those are definitive passages on your liberty in Christ. They ought to be in your Bible. We talked about the fact that when Christ died on the cross, He fulfilled the law, and you and I are not under the law, and we can pretty much do whatever we want to do. There is no constraint on us as far as a legal system in the Bible that puts us under some kind of law, but within that becomes the fact that I can do all things, but not all things are wise to do. Then it goes back to the other principles: somebody is always watching your life. You may take liberty to do something that you know you can do that may be a stumbling block for another younger Christian. You may go somewhere and blow it off like, "Gee, I can go here," but it is a stumbling block to another younger Christian. All things are

lawful, but not all things are expedient. We talked about the aspect of your liberty in Christ. Just because you have liberty, that does not give you the right to abuse that liberty.

## ➤ Whatsoever Is Not Of Faith Is Sin

The last verse we looked at was Romans 14:23.

*Romans 14:23*

*And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*

This is the verse that basically just puts us all down on our knees. We learned some great things there. I gave you a description of what sin is. I showed you that sin, and this is the way we look at it, sin never starts with what we do. We think sin is something we do, and that may be the result of sin, and that may be sin what we do. The truth of the matter is sin does not start with the act. Sin starts in our heart.

When the devil wanted to overthrow God way back there, Ezekiel 28:15 says he was perfect in all his ways until iniquity was found in him. Isaiah 14:13-14 says he lifted that in his heart, "I will lift myself up." Sin always starts in the heart. That is why the Bible says that we are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, with all of our mind, with all of our soul, and all of our strength.

*Mark 12:30*

*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.*

We went from that, and we studied a great study on the progression of faith. Remember, we looked at the life of Abraham. We studied how the life of Abraham is such a mirrored picture of your life and my life in our process of growth. Here is a guy that goes from about 175 years old. He starts out when God calls him, and he cannot do anything right. He makes all kinds of mistakes all through his progression. He makes mistakes, but he gets in a better, closer relationship with God. Finally, you get to Genesis 22 when he is about 99 years in his life that he really does what God wants him to do, and he comes to the point where he trusts God for everything. He winds up being called the friend of God.

I showed you the three stages of his life that match up to the three stages of our life. There is a stage of his life where he is without God, just like there is a stage of your life that you are without God. Then there was a stage in his life that God called him, and that would match up to the time that God called you and you got saved. Then he goes through a training process, does he not? He makes a lot of mistakes, but he makes progress forward. Then finally, we see the third stage where he really becomes everything that God wants him to be, and now his ministry really begins. I remember telling you that one of the greatest types of way that you will study the Bible will be character studies. Character studies of studying the people in the Bible are one of the richest sources of material that you are ever going to find in any way that you study.

## II. The Seven Concepts of Spiritual Maturity

Then we came to Romans 15. Finally, we built Romans 15 around the seven concepts of spiritual maturity. We talked about what you and I ought to be doing as Christ-like individuals, Christians. We have been talking about a process of your spiritual growth. In Romans 15, we see the seven basic concepts that make us mature and strong as Christians.

Paul said something one time that I think is very instructive. He said it in 1 Corinthians 13:11.

*1 Corinthians 13:11*

*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

I looked at that at one time in my life, and I saw as I was putting together, and I thought you before how that there are in the Bible seven basic stages of spiritual growth. Young Christians are likened to children. If you have young children, you know that young children are dependent on older parents to help them with just about everything in life, much as younger Christians are dependent on older Christians to help them with things in their spiritual life. Paul says that he was a child. But he said when he became a man, and that would represent our coming to the spiritual maturity that God wants us to be, it says he put away childish things.

I have looked at that verse a lot of times, and I have used that verse many, many times. It really was not until this week as I was correlating this stuff and putting it all together that it just popped out at me that when he says, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." It did not strike me that in that verse there are three things. There are three things that he became a man in. As I looked at that, I thought to myself, "Wow," and these are the exact same three things that you and I need to grow up spiritually. Look at the verse.

The first thing he says is that the way he spoke, he grew up in the way that he said things. I think that is probably the biggest problem that we have as young Christians: that we do not learn to speak the things the way that God would have us to speak them. Children speak one way, adults speak another, and children come to the point where they say a lot of things that sometimes are not true, not because they are lying, but because their imagination carries with it. So he grew up in the way that he spoke.

The second thing that he grew up in was the way he understood things. He talked about that Thursday night, how that understanding in the Bible will always be the key element that puts God in any equation of whatever you are dealing with.

Then he grew up in the way he thought. Of course, that goes back to when you build a relationship with God and you learn the principles of the Word of God, something that I keep before you all the time, that it helps you at that point in your life to better think the way God thinks. He says, "When I was a child, I spake as a child."

One of the great characteristics of children is that they get into the roughest fights over the stupidest stuff. That is just kids. We have our three grandkids over, and they are good kids most of the time, but they are kids. Somebody will get something else. Somebody will get somebody else's toy, or they are playing with something, and somebody else will lay it down for a minute, and somebody will pick it up. World War III breaks out because children fight over stuff that does not mean anything. That is a great lesson for all of us because we as Christians, when we do not grow up and we are still immature or we refuse to grow up, we fight over stuff that really does not matter.

I have seen churches split and get into the biggest fights you ever saw in your life because they decided to buy new choir robes, and nobody could decide on the color. Half the church wanted brown, the other church wanted green. Somebody else's faction wanted red, and everybody had their doctrinal reason for it, and when they got one or the other, everybody got mad. I have seen people that had their special seats in church. If you are a visitor and you come into that and you sit in their seat, you will not get a handshake. You will get yanked out of that seat so fast you will not know what hit you. I have actually seen people come to the point where they come up and they will say, "That is my seat," to a visitor, "You are sitting in my seat." That is immature stuff. It happens all the time. So he grew up in the way that he spoke. He grew up in a way that he understood things, and he grew up to be a man in a way that he thought.

Then we talked about the book of Ephesians, and I talked about Ephesians 4:13, which talks about that our job and your job is to grow up into Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, being Christ-like.

*Ephesians 4:13*

*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:*

Then we talked about the seven marks of a spiritually mature Christian. This is where we are at today, going to finish the last two.

➤ 1.) Bear the Infirmities of the Weak

He talks about the fact that they are strong, not the infirmities of the weak. We talked about that is our job. Our job as strong Christians is not to hurt younger Christians, but to help them grow, to bear their infirmities. When you start working with people and start dealing with people, you are going to see how that really comes into play because young Christians, when they first come in, many times, this is not true of everybody. Some people come in and just fit in like a hand in a glove. Others have to struggle through things to get their feet on the ground. Our job is to help bear those infirmities.

➤ 2.) Not to Please Ourselves

The second thing we saw was in Romans 15:2, that we are not to please ourselves. The job of the work and the ministry is not to please yourself, but is to please those that you are working with. I do not mean that you become a man pleaser in what you preach or what you say, but you please them as far as helping them grow.

### ➤ 3.) Edifying Others

Then the third thing we saw was the concept of edification, edifying others. That means you strengthen them. You give them help. You encourage them. When they do something well, you broaden it and let them know that you are encouraging them in what they are doing.

### ➤ 4.) Receive Others

Then the one that we looked at was in Romans 15:7, receiving others. We talked about that, how that deals with the aspect that no matter what somebody has done or where they are at, what they have been involved in, that our job, the bottom line of the church, is restoration. It is to receive others and to help them get back where they need to be.

### ➤ 5.) Admonish Others

Then the one we finished on last time was Romans 15:14, to admonish others. We talked about the concept of admonishment. That brings us up and recaps the important points of where we have talked about. You should have those things marked in your Bible.

Now today we are going to look at the last two, and we are going to close this chapter. I want you to understand this. In reality, and this is true of certain books in the Bible, we have a chapter 16 left. We have a chapter that we have to deal with yet, Romans 16. But the truth of the matter is the book really closes at the end of Romans 15. All he does in Romans 16 is shake it by to some people, recognize some people. I am not saying that there are not some great principles in there. We will talk about those. There is one of the greatest concepts of ministry that you need to understand in Romans 16. But as far as the instructional teaching is concerned, it is over in Romans 15. He has nothing more to give us in a progressional study. It is now closing out, and there are some good things there.

But the book is really over in Romans 15, much like the book of Acts. The book of Acts has 28 chapters in it. But if you know your Bible, you know that technically speaking, the book of Acts is over in Acts 20. What happens in Acts 20 is Paul is in Ephesus, and he is saying goodbye to the elders in Ephesus, and then he is going down to Jerusalem, which is against what God told him to do. So from Acts 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28, that all deals with Paul going to Jerusalem, getting thrown into prison, and then making his way finally to Rome where they finally kill him. The end of the book of Acts is in Acts 20. That starts what we know as church history. When you come to Revelation 2, the first church that it talks about is the church at Ephesus. That is exactly where Paul was in Acts 20. So there are some books in the Bible that do that. Of course, you need to know that in the book of Romans, for all practical purposes, the teaching structure is over in Romans 15. Then in Romans 16, he says his farewells, what Paul was famous for doing. We will talk about that when we get into that next week.

Now I am going to begin reading here in Romans 15. Let us turn to it. We will pick it up here in verse 24.

*Romans 15:24-33*

*24 Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.*

*25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.*

*26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.*

*27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.*

*28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.*

*29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.*

*30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;*

*31 That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judæa; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;*

*32 That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.*

*33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

Now Father, we thank and praise You for the Lord Jesus, and as we look at the last part of this great chapter and look at these last two great concepts, we pray Father that You will give us the wisdom, the insight, and everything that we need to see and understand. We love You Father, and we thank You for what You have given us, and we thank You for our church, for the Bible that You provided for us, and for the good people that are here. We pray Father that You will continue to build leadership in this church as we saw yesterday with the ladies and last week with the men. Lord, we are just so thankful for the fact that there are men and women in this church that let none of Your words fall to the ground. They want to be everything that God wants them to be, and help us Father to continue to feed that and to grow that and to cultivate that. We thank You for all the new ones that were there yesterday, Lord, and some 60 ladies that came out to be part of what we are trying to do. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

### III. The Sixth Concept: Ministering to People

The first thing I want you to see here, and I think this is something that you want to always remember about Paul: Paul was a very direct guy. Once God met Paul on the road to Damascus in Acts 9, Paul's life was totally changed. He is a picture of what your life and my life should be from that point on. Up to that point, he was persecuting Christians. His job was to go find where Christians were, put them in jail, and they were persecuted by the Jews because of their new faith

in Christ that the Jews utterly rejected. But when God got a hold of him on the road to Damascus, he was changed. It is a picture of your life and my life when we got saved. Whenever you go after that and you study Paul's life, wherever he goes, whatever he does, whatever he writes, Paul has one thing on his mind: it is people. You see it in everything that he says and everything that he does. He cannot close out a letter without addressing eight or nine different folks that have meant something to him in the ministry or who are doing something in the ministry. For me, it always set the example of what my ministry needed to be about and to be around, and that is people. I do not know how pastors justify what they do by ministering to inanimate objects. The ministry is people.

We are going to talk about that aspect today because when you look down here at Romans 15:25 and 27, you find what the next, the sixth thing is that we need to look at.

*Romans 15:27*

*It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.*

The next thing we are going to look at on our seven concepts is the fact that a strong Christian ministers to people, ministers to people. Now I know the word "minister" is a word that is another loose term that we probably do not understand. Before I explain that, I want you to look at Romans 15:7 because down here in Romans 15:27, it talks about ministering unto them in carnal things.

*Romans 15:7*

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

We think of the word "carnal" as a bad word. When the Bible talks about that we are not to be carnally minded, that we are not to do carnal things, carnal things are worldly things, but not all worldly things are bad. You are sitting here today in a carnal state in one sense, and that is you are still in your physical body. You may not be in a carnal sense as your spiritual condition, but your physical body is a carnal body. Carnal means that you are in a physical body, and what he is saying here is this: he is saying that not only is it our duty to minister to people in spiritual things, but he says also in carnal things, and this leads us to a great concept about ministry that we want to talk about today.

For those of you who work with me in ministry, and many of you do, there are many of you who want to get involved in working with ministry, you expressed that desire to me. May I say this to you: learn what I am about to tell you today because I am going to define for you today from the Bible sense what ministry really is. I want you to go out of here today understanding that concept.

In a particular case here, let us put it in a historical context. What he is talking about here is ministering to them carnally, is the fact that the Jews down in Jerusalem, the Christians, the brethren that are in Jerusalem, they are going through a very tough time right now. There was a famine in Jerusalem, and it was a very severe famine during this period of time, and they are

under a lot of persecution, not only from the Romans, but also from the Jews themselves, and they are going through a very tough time, and they do not have a lot, and they are suffering greatly.

You want to put another reference in here: all this material that we are talking about here is found in 2 Corinthians 9, and you want to go back and read that and make your application back and forth because this is talking about the same thing in 2 Corinthians 9, and that will be your cross-reference. What he is saying basically is this: he is saying that we got salvation from the Jews because John 4:22 says, "Salvation is of the Jews." He said because they ministered to us and gave us salvation, we not only want to minister to them spiritually, teach them the Bible, but when they have a need, we want to minister to them in carnal things or physical things. Of course, what they are doing here is they take up a collection, they take up an offering, and they send that offering down to the poor saints in Jerusalem who are having a very tough time to help them, to give them some kind of relief. Paul makes a reference to this in 2 Corinthians 9, which is the great chapter on giving, and it is a great concept. But when we look at this passage, it helps us better understand what ministry is and how it is defined.

What is real ministry? I am not looking for an answer, but answer it in your own mind. You have heard me say it many, many times that it is people, but that is not the lowest common denominator yet. I know the ministry is people. We do not minister to chairs, we do not minister to poles, we minister to people. We talk about having a preaching ministry. What does that really mean? We talk about having a teaching ministry, a discipleship ministry. We talk about establishing a counseling ministry. We have an athletic ministry. But in reality, those are words that we use. It is like the word "born again." It is like the word "saved."

A while back, we started a study of the seven things that changed about you the day you got saved. In that study, we focused on the aspect of what it really meant to be saved. We understand the terminology. We know we say "born again," "I am saved," "I am born again," "I am washed in the blood." But if the average Christian, if you sat them down and said, "Explain to me exactly what that means and how that relates to what happened to you when you got saved," most people could not do it. So what we did is we took a series and we talked about the seven things that changed about you the day you got saved. What made you different before you were saved to a split second after you asked Christ to save you? We went through that. We have a lesson on that. My wife taught the ladies on that. I am going to have her teach the ladies again on a Saturday in the fall for all the new ladies. But it is imperative that you understand that, and that you understand what "saved" really means, what "born again" really means. It is also imperative that you understand what the real concept of ministry means from a Bible sense.

Now, I do not know if you know this or not, but every man and woman on planet earth has three basic needs. Three basic needs. In those three basic needs is really what it means to minister to somebody. I want to talk to you about the three aspects of ministry. In this, you will see ministry defined.

When God made you, we know that God made you in a Trinity form after Himself. Because sitting here today, if you are saved, you have a body, you have a soul, and you have a spirit.

Because you have a body, soul, and spirit, and remember now that three in the Bible is the number of completion. When God does something in a complete form, He does it by a system of threes. When He does something in a perfect form, He does it by a system of seven. Those are all things that we have learned in the past. But three in your Bible is the number of completion. So when God made you and made you complete to do the work for Him, He gave you a body, He gave you a soul, and He gave you a spirit.

Let me say this: we all have these same three basic needs. Ministry is understanding how with the Word of God to fulfill those needs in a person's life. God and God alone is able to fulfill you in those three areas. Through the ministry of the Word of God as a Christian, we should understand these three aspects and be able to use discernment and discretion when you are starting to work with somebody.

As Christians, we are much like a doctor. As a doctor, if you ever go to the doctor, a doctor follows a pretty standard approach to things. The first thing he does is he listens to you. Then after he listens to you, based on what you say, he makes a diagnosis of what is wrong with you. Then after he makes a diagnosis, he will prescribe a prescription for you. If he is any kind of doctor, then he will follow up with you after care, making sure that what he gave you was working and everything is following right along the line.

The bottom line is, ladies and gentlemen, that is what you and I ought to be doing. It was no accident that Jesus Christ was called the great physician. In fact, you ought to go through your Bible sometime and look at the medical terms and how they are used in the Bible. There is something in the Old Testament called the balm of Gilead. The balm of Gilead was a salve that came from Gilead that when people had some kind of injury or people had some kind of hurt physically, something from this place in Gilead put together a salve that they put on whatever the problem was, and it helped heal them. In the Bible, the balm of Gilead, that salve that you put on your arm or your leg or whatever that helped heal it, is a picture of the Word of God.

You are going to find that the Bible talks about healing, not in the sense of the healing that the Charismatic crowd talks about, but you will find that the Bible talks about there is a time when the nations get healed. There is a time in people's lives right now that you may be going through some great distress in your life. Something may have happened in your life, and something may have transpired that has really got your world upside down, and there has to be a healing process that you go through. You ought to go through the Bible sometime. You only find the word "medicine" two times in the Bible. You ought to look at the context of those two. We are not talking about physical medicine there. We are talking about, again, the Word of God.

We talk about biblical counseling. We talk about what it really is and how that as you get to a certain point in your life where you really become effective in dealing with people. I deal with people all week long. I have since I got into the ministry. I have dealt with every scenario, every circumstance, probably a hundred times over. I have never had a new case of a new problem of anything for the last 20 years, 10 years, whatever. It is always the same. They just vary a little bit.

When you start to talk about ministering to people, the real definition of ministry is understanding the three basic needs that people have. Every problem they have is going to be in one of those three areas. Your job as a Christian physician is to diagnose in their life from the Word of God which area, or many times multiple areas. Your job as a Christian is to be a continuance of the great physician. You help people who are hurting. You diagnose their problems. What else do doctors do? You deliver babies. These babies are spiritual babies that are born again. Many of you in time, you need to become the attending physician by which somebody is born again. It is all there.

Now, let us talk about the three needs that we all have.

➤ 1.) Physical Needs

We all have physical needs. Remember I told you, you are a body, soul, and spirit. You have a body. It is a physical body. It is a carnal body. Therefore, you as an individual, I as an individual, are going to have physical needs.

➤ 2.) Spiritual Needs

We are also a body, soul, and spirit. Then our soul is going to have spiritual needs. That spiritual need is going to be the fact that your soul is the spiritual part of you, and it has spiritual needs.

➤ 3.) Emotional Needs

Then you have a spirit. The spirit will always line up to your emotional need.

*Proverbs 25:28*

*He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.*

Your body represents the physical needs that you have. Your soul represents the spiritual need that you have, and your emotional stability represents the emotional side or the needs that you have represents your spirit.

I told you last week that for those of you that sing and you sing in church, you go back and find out in the Bible where it is defined and what music is supposed to do. Did anybody go back and look it up? What happens in 1 Samuel 16:23?

*1 Samuel 16:23*

*And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.*

That is right, through music. So she got the verse there in 1 Samuel 16 that talks about the fact that Saul had a troubled spirit. It really was an evil spirit. So what David did, David came in and he played songs, obviously the Psalms or songs that he made up. When he did that, the music ministered, and the evil spirit left, and the spirit from the Lord came back. So that is the definitive passage in the Bible that tells you that your music does not minister to the flesh. Oh,

but it does in so many churches today, does it not? When you do not get the Bible for your definitions, you are going to have some problems.

I have never understood why you have to have a praise band or you have to have four or five people up there in front of everybody who lead in the prayer worship part of the service. What are you saying? It is the fact that if you have to have four or five people up here to help you praise God and sing to God, you are really in trouble. The Holy Spirit of God inside you ought to be enough. Those people stand up there, for them it is Saturday Night Live. They sway back and forth, and they put their heads back.

Did you ever see, and most of you have never probably been in this, but years ago when Bible colleges, they all had singing groups. Maybe they still do. I have been out of the circle for so long now. They used to have singing groups. Those singing groups were the cleanest young people that you ever saw in your life. They had the haircut right, the girls had the right dresses on. They were absolutely, really looked good. They had a big bus, Liberty Baptist College, Tennessee Temple, all these things. They went around everywhere, and everywhere, the whole thing. They would go everywhere. They would go into churches, and they were for recruiting because the parents saw how clean the kids were. They saw their testimonies. They saw all that it was, and it spoke well of the school. So all the parents, you know where this is going, that when they send their kids to college, it is going to be to that college because they want their kids singing to represent what the college is supposed to turn out. It was the most phony show you ever saw in your life. It looks good if you are just there for one thing. But when you go to the next church and the next church and the next church, and the testimonies are the same, they cry in the same places. They know they will all sing together, and then the guys are over here, and the girls are over here because in Bible colleges, the girls and the guys never get together. Well, they do. They just do not ever know they do. So they are separated. The girls, four or five girls over here, four or five guys over here. The guys have the same kind of suits on, girls have the same kind of dresses on. They are all singing together. Then the guys will stop singing, and the girls will sing. Choreography to the hilt. As soon as the girls start to sing, and every guy has one hand on the mic, grabs the cord, turns and watches the girls. When the guys start singing, choreography, the girls look at the guys and stop singing, and they look at the guys. It is as fake as a three-dollar bill.

Let me tell you something: that does not minister to your spirit. That ministers to your flesh. Music in churches today ministers to your flesh. That is why they call it Christian rock. Real Bible-based music is built on Colossians 3:16, on the Word of God and the doctrine in the Word of God, because music is supposed to minister to your spirit, not your soul, and certainly not your flesh. We have lost that concept today. So you have physical needs, that is your body. You have emotional needs, that is your spirit, and you have spiritual needs.

Now let me just jump back into the problem here. We all have those needs. You do not have four. You do not have two. You do not have six. You all have three. You are not the exception to the rule and have a fourth one. You only have three. Here is what happens just so you know. Put this together. Here is what happens: when you try to fulfill those three needs outside the Word of God, and you as an unsaved man or an unsaved woman, or even a saved person who is out in the

world and not doing what is right with God, when you try to fulfill those three areas outside of God and the Word of God, you can put one big word down in capital letters: it is DISASTER because you are feeding something with the wrong stuff, and it simply will not work.

Let me ask you a question. I have a little cup of water here. It has a little bit of an ice cube. The greatest thing in the world we take for granted is this. Do you realize that? Do you realize if you go out on a hot day and you mow the lawn, or you played ball last night, and we all went over to eat someplace, which we did, and you gobbled down two or three Coca-Colas, or you have your power drinks that restore all the vitamins to you, you get really thirsty. You have an iced tea or you have a lemonade or whatever your preference is. Do you realize that all the substitute stuff out there that you drink, nothing will satisfy you and quench your thirst more than water will? Do you know why that is? Because God made your body that the natural thing of water that God put down here has no smell to it, at least it should not have, has no taste to it, unless they put too much chlorine in it. That is the only thing that has no color to it. It has no flavor to it, but it is completely bland. It is not worldly. It is not dressed up. It is not something that is your favorite color, but it is the only thing that will satisfy your thirst. Do you know why that is? Water is a picture of the Word of God in the Bible.

Just like you can drink your power drink, you can drink your iced tea, you can drink your Coke, you can drink whatever you want, and it will never satisfy or quench your thirst. There is only one thing that God uses when He made you that will cleanse your body and get the impurities out of your body, and that is drinking lots of water. As a spiritual sense, there is only one thing that will get the impurities out of your body, and that is drinking God's spiritual water, the Word of God. You putting all the stuff the world into your life, trying to fulfill these three things with that, it will be a disaster, absolute and total. Of course, this is the basic fundamental concept of ministering to people, fixing their three areas and getting them into a healthy relationship and being able to discern between which one of these things that is an issue.

Let me say this, and I hear this all the time, and it drives me nuts. When it comes to working with people, we get this idea that because we were very worldly before we got saved, and we were out in the world and did everything that the world does, that that gives us an edge up on helping people with the same problems. You have heard me say it many, many times, you cannot solve problems with the same thinking that caused those problems. So when you start to work with me or you want to help me, your personal background and experience of where you have been or what you have done, and how many drugs you took, and how many of this, and you smoked that, and you drank this, it means absolutely nothing in helping me get somebody down the line. That may look good on your resume, but it means absolutely nothing because the only thing at the end of the day that is going to help anybody get out of those things is recognizing they have problems in those three areas and being able to, through discretion and discernment, call up the biblical principles, our spiritual prescriptions.

When somebody sits down and lays out their heartache and lays out their problem, I listen to them, and immediately while they are talking to me, I am not looking back in my life and saying, "Well, I did that," or "I did not do that," or "Yeah, I did that, but I did it better than you did." No, I simply start formulating the prescription, the biblical principles from the balm of Gilead that I

am going to apply to their wounded soul, their wounded spirit, or their wounded flesh. Those three things will manifest themselves in different ways. We are going to talk about those here as we come on through there. So you may get it through your head that it is not your past experience of the world that is going to help anybody. It is learning those biblical principles. Here is what you do: the three L's. You learn them, principles. You live them, then you lay them out. That is just where it has to go. Your experience is worthless to me, like a busted garden hose, without being filled with the principles of God in your life and knowing how to use them. That is why everything we do, we build around principles.

## IV. Ministry Begins at Home: The Marriage Model

Now, let me broaden this even more that you might better grasp it. I am going to kind of do a couple of variant things here, but I want you to see this, how it all ties together. One of the number one problems you are going to be in ministry with, bar none, the number one issue in ministry that you are going to be faced with, is marital problems. I want to tell you that all marital problems and issues will stem from this same area. It is the thing that we do not understand that when we talk about ministry, and we talk about getting involved in ministry, plain and simple, your marriage is your first ministry. Because your marriage is your first ministry, if you cannot make that one work, you will never get to the other one.

*1 Timothy 3:5*

*For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?*

It is just that simple. The failure of marriages, 100% of the time, not 98, not my famous 99.9999, 100% of the time without exception, will be a failure in these three areas. Here is what men do not know. Here is what as somebody ministering to couples in marital issues need to know. The failure of every marriage will be simply based on that a woman has physical needs, that is her body. She has emotional needs, that is her spirit, and she has spiritual needs, that is her soul. The husband on the other side will have the same three basic needs. He will have physical needs, he will have emotional needs, and he will have spiritual needs.

Here lies the problem: they may have the same three issues—physical needs, spiritual needs, and emotional needs—but they are not met the same way. If you want to know where marital problems start, it starts with a husband or a wife who does not understand that. First of all, most husbands are absolutely oblivious, as most wives are absolutely oblivious, that their spouses even have these three issues. They think that they cannot get along because of this or because of that. They do not see that the fundamental problem in every relationship will be the fundamental problem in our life is that we have three basic needs, and when those three basic needs are not met, you are going to have issues.

They are not the same. The woman's physical needs are different than a man's. Her emotional needs, her spirit, is totally different from a man. You guys get out there on a ball field, and you smack each other around, or get on a basketball court, and somebody gets a little gruff, and somebody else gets gruff, and you push each other around, and you smell each other's breath for a while, and then what do you do? You pull out at a guy, shake their hand, and say, "That is all

right, good job." You go on, and you go out to eat, and you have fun, and you forget about it. Because you can do that when you hurt somebody or say something to somebody, you think you can do that same thing with your wife, and she just forgets it like you do. A wife's spirit is much more crucial than a man's spirit, and most bozos do not know that. So they will say things to her, they will crush her spirit, they will hurt her some way in her spirit, and then come back and say, "Well, I am sorry. What is the matter? I said I was sorry. I am sorry. Can we have sex now?" That is the way men think. Ladies, amen. She has spiritual needs, and they are different than a man's spiritual needs. Men are oblivious. Women are oblivious that they even have these needs. This is what causes the problem: they are not the same.

As a Christian, I have the same three needs that need to be fulfilled by my relationship with God and the Word of God. As individuals, as a child of God, and in my relationship with Him, they have to be only fulfilled through that. Here is what you want to remember, and here is how you want to put it together. Remember Ephesians 5? When He talked about the concept of the church, what did He use? He used marriage.

*Ephesians 5:25*

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*

I am going to show you something that will absolutely revolutionize your mindset, if you are paying attention, to not only your own relationship with your husband and wife, but your ability to be able to discern and work with people who are having issues. Because this is where it really lies. This never gets taught today because nobody knows this today, because nobody believes that book anymore. But you have three basic needs. In your marriage relationship, you have three basic needs. They are connected if you are a Christian, because you remember that marriage is the earthly picture of what our relationship should be with Christ, the bride and the bridegroom. The model for marriage is also the model for ministry.

Now here it comes. Just as Christ, my husband, is the strong leader in my relationship, and I am the weaker vessel, Christ knows that I have needs in these three areas. Christ understands that I have physical needs as the weaker vessel. I have emotional needs as the weaker vessel. And I have spiritual needs as the weaker vessel. But we are not done yet. Here is the part you probably never understood: Christ has those same three needs. Do you know that? It is hard for us to believe that Christ would have physical needs. What does He need? You are saying, "Bob, you are telling me that Christ has emotional needs? Bob, you are telling me that Christ has spiritual needs?" Yes, He does. The fact that you do not know that probably suggests that you are not doing your part.

Here is how it works. I am the weaker vessel. He is the stronger one. He bears my infirmities. But because I am the weaker vessel, what does He do? He meets my three spiritual needs first. Then what do I do? Once I grow up, I meet His three needs. Want to know what they are?

➤ 1.) Physical Need: A Body

You say, "What in the world could Christ have a physical need for?" I will tell you, He needs a body, a physical body. He had one when He was here, but then He went back to heaven. What

did He tell His disciples? "Greater things than these shall ye do." He picked 12 men to carry this thing, and they were supposed to fulfill what He did not do. Do you know what He is looking for today in a physical sense? Do you know what physical need Christ needs? He needs your body to be a living sacrifice for Him, to do for Him what He is not doing anymore because He thought He would have a body to do it in. He has a physical need. That physical need is a body. He needs a body to do what He wants to do. He has a message to get out, but no body to get it into. That is why we have been talking about your body being a living sacrifice and giving those things to Him because His physical need is a body. He needs a body. When He is strong, when He meets your physical need first, He gives you everything you need. He gives you a job. He gives you an income. He gives you a home. He gives you a car.

*Philippians 4:19*

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

He did all that for one reason: so you would grow up and become strong, that He would meet that need physically, and then you would meet His need physically and become His body. Do they not call the church the body of Christ? He has a physical need. It is a body.

## ➤ 2.) Emotional Need: Not to Grieve Him

You say, "Well, you got through that one, but how in the world does Christ have emotional needs? I thought He was the rock. I thought He was the rock of ages, the same yesterday and forever." How does Jesus Christ have emotional needs? My Bible says that He is a high priest, but He is touched with my infirmities, so He feels something. How can you read the Song of Solomon and not see Him pouring out His emotions to you, the church? When Lazarus died in John 11, did He not weep? I know He has emotional needs, like He has physical needs, because the physical need is He needs a body. When you do not fulfill that body, then you do not fulfill His emotional need, and you grieve Him.

*Ephesians 4:30*

*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

We talked yesterday about making hard decisions, did we not, ladies? And the guys before last week, making hard decisions, being able to make the hard decisions within ministry that are not popular. I told you that the reason why some of you or many of you will never be great leaders is not because you make bad decisions, but because you will never learn to make the hard decisions. The reason why you will not is because you are always worried about hurting somebody's feeling. What are you going to do with that? You are more worried about hurting your friend's feelings and care nothing about hurting God's feeling? That verse says you grieve Him. That is an emotion. So He has physical needs. He needs a body. When you do not fulfill that body, then you do not fulfill His emotional need, and you grieve Him.

## ➤ 3.) Spiritual Need: To Be Ministered To

You say, "Well, you slipped by that one, but how in the world does He need to be ministered to?" Let me just show you. Maybe you do not know as much as you thought you knew about your relationship with Jesus Christ. In Antioch, the first church found in Acts 11:26 where they are first called Christians. Acts 13:2, I think it is one of the greatest verses in the Bible because it says:

*Acts 13:2*

*As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*

They are not ministering to the world first. They are ministering to the Lord. Do you even know how to minister to Him? Do you even have an inkling of how you as a New Testament Christian fulfill His spiritual need? God is a body. He is a soul, and He is a spirit. His body is Jesus Christ, His soul is God, and the spirit is the Holy Spirit. He made you after Himself. Just like you have three needs, He has three needs. The model is simply this: He meets your needs as a weaker vessel, as His bride, as His wife. He meets your three spiritual needs first as a weaker vessel, you are to grow up and then meet His three needs. You become His body. You do not grieve Him any more than you have to. You certainly are going to find out how to minister to Him. If you do not know that today, I would not spend one more day on this planet until you find out how to do it.

Here we go. Not one more day. Not one more day. Not one more day. Do you find out how to minister to Him, and you are going to minister to other people? Give me a break. No wonder Christianity is in the sorry shape that it is. Boys and girls, you have three ministries to get down long before you ever get to something in this church. You have to learn first how to minister to the Lord. Then you have to learn how to minister to your wife or your husband, and then your children, and then other people.

Now somebody says, "Well, what about me? I am not married." You have the best deal of it all.

*1 Corinthians 7:32-33*

*32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:*

*33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.*

Let me explain what he is saying. He is not saying it is wrong to get married, but Paul does say that not being married and staying celibate is a gift. Not everybody can have, but Paul had it. His first advice to anybody is to see if you have that gift because the bottom line is this: you can focus more and do more and stay more on task for the Lord if you are single because you do not have to balance all the things around. You do not have to worry about a husband or a wife. You have the freedom to totally dedicate yourself to what God wants you to do. When you get married down the line, there is nothing wrong with that. You learn how to balance it out. You get a husband or a wife who understands the same concepts, and then you work together, and you make it work. That is why she is not called a helpmate. She is called a help meet. She helps meet.

M-E-E-T. She helps make the work easier by balancing it out and understanding what you need to do.

If you are single right now, my advice to you is this: take that time that God has given you. If you want a husband or you want a wife, God knows it more than you do. The last thing you want to do is get the wrong bozo with the wrong woman. He knows your heart and your desire more than you do. In the right time, if that is what He wants, you will have him, you will have everything you want. Your job is not to focus on what you do not have, but focus on what you do have. We never get that concept. We always have to focus on what we do not have and never focus on what we do have. You have the greatest time in your life right now to get everything under your belt that you know exactly what God wants you to do and how to do it.

Maybe you are here in our church, and you are divorced, and you have several kids, and you are saying, "Well, I do not have a husband, but yet I have kids they are going to take care of." That is what this church is for. Let us help you with that. Let us be there to help you do what you have to do. What do you think church is for, just so we can come and get everything from you and give you nothing back? That is our job. It is my job. The job of every man in this church is to look out there, or young guys or young gals that do not have another spouse, whatever, and just kind of be there and help them along, realizing the fact that that is a tough load to carry and help lift that burden. It is called "labors together." We all have those three needs, and God is the only one who can fill them, and your job and my job in ministry is to meet those needs to the Lord first. Make sure He has already met yours. Make sure you meet His, and then He will take you and allow you to meet others and their needs.

## V. The Seventh Concept: Praying for Each Other

Then we have the seventh great concept in Romans 15:30. I am telling you, if you do not know what it means to minister to the Lord, I would not let another day go by until I found out.

*Romans 15:30*

*Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;*

The last thing is this great fact, and that is the fact that we pray for each other. I want you to note this because it is very important. This is the last thing he mentions. Does that mean anything to anybody that is paying attention? Remember in Ephesians 6:18, when he laid out the armor of God, the last thing he talked about was prayer.

*Ephesians 6:18*

*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*

One of the last things in 1 Thessalonians 5, when he closed that book out, the last thing he says was, "Pray without ceasing."

*1 Thessalonians 5:17*

*Pray without ceasing.*

Prayer in Paul's things is always listed last. It is not listed last because it is the least important. It is listed last because prayer is the glue that holds it all together. It is not listed last because, "Oh yeah, put prayer down." It is listed last because without that, nothing else matters. Prayer is the glue. It is the substance which holds everything together.

I am going to give you a great verse. When I was ordained into the ministry and I was leaving Ohio to come to Kansas City, Mel Sobaka, my father in the Lord, pulled me aside, put his arm around me, and prayed with me. He probably knew at that point that we did not know when we would see each other again or if we ever would. He was going to New York, and I would go into Kansas City. That is quite a far piece. He pulled me into his arms, and he prayed with me, and he said, "I want to give you this verse." This is the last verse he gave me when I left Canton some 35 years ago. It is found in 1 Samuel 12:23. It has been my verse, whether I have ever told you about it or not. It has been my verse for you in this church that are one with me in ministry.

*1 Samuel 12:23*

*Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way.*

There is no profit in me getting up and trying to teach you the good and right way of the Bible if I am not praying for you because prayer is the substance that holds it all together. I showed you a couple of weeks back the life of Abraham and how through his progress in life and walk with God, you find the first time in the Bible that the word "prayers" is mentioned in Genesis 20:17. In Genesis 18, you find the model for your attitude in prayer. I gave it to you in Romans 8:26, and I showed you why 99.999999% of God's people's prayers never leave the room when they pray them.

*Romans 8:26*

*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

I told you about Romans 8:26 where it talks about, it laid out the infirmity that we do not know how to pray. I told you that we as God's people have three infirmities. Romans 6:19 says we have an infirmity of the flesh.

*Romans 6:19*

*I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.*

Psalms 77:10 tells us we have an infirmity, we forget what God has done for us.

*Psalms 77:10*

*And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.*

Romans 8:26 tells us that we have the infirmity that we do not know how to pray and do not pray the right way. The power of God in our lives will always be in direct proportion to the power of prayer in our lives. This is why our prayer groups are so important. This is why, as I told you yesterday in the ladies' meeting and the men last week, this is why you have seen the face of our church completely change. You do not know what it means to walk in here on Sunday morning and see 40 ladies up there and 20 down here praying, and the men getting off in their little groups. You do not know what it does because you do not understand the concept that prayer is the thing that pulls it all together. We had to learn to get to this point. It was not something we could start. What is the point of praying when you do not know what and how to pray? We had to take a long time and work it out and get it to the place where we got a good foundation in this church that understands the concepts, and now it is changing everything about us exactly the way that it should.

I told you in the Old Testament tabernacle, I showed you how that is such a beautiful picture of you and me. It is a picture that when you saw that tabernacle, if you would be walking through the desert and you walked up on this tabernacle, from the outside it looked like just a regular tent. It was covered with animal skins all the way around, and it was nothing any different from any other tent you could buy at a used Army Navy store. But what was on the inside was what counted. That is a picture of you and me. In that tabernacle, the skin of animals covered the outside, but the glory of God was on the inside. You and me, the skin of human flesh covers the outside, but it is the glory of God that is really on the inside. At 40 years, they wandered through the wilderness until they got to a place where God said, "Okay, now it is going to be permanent." That is a picture of your life and my life. That is a picture of your life and my life, wandering through the wilderness of sin, wandering through all of the things that we have to go through, and then finally getting to be with the Lord Jesus Christ forever.

Within that tabernacle, you have everything that you need in the ministry. You have the brazen altar where the sacrifice, that represents Calvary. When you walked into that door, there was a laver there of water that you had to wash your feet off because there was no floor in the tabernacle, and a priest had to stay clean. It is a picture of your life and my life before we do ministry, washing off the filth of this old world that has gotten on our feet before we go in. Then you went into that place. On one side was the showbread baked fresh every day. A picture of the Word of God, 12 for each one for each tribe, but laid out six, six, and then six because it is a picture of the Word of God, and there are 66 books in your Bible. Then on the other side, you had the seven-pronged candlestick, and that is a picture of the Holy Spirit of God. It was completely dark in there. When the priest came out of that blazing sun of the Sinai desert, and he walked into that dark room where there was no light whatsoever but that candlestick, it was a lot like you and I walking out of the bright sunlight going into a movie theater. You know what you better do? You better stop for a minute and let your eyes adjust to the dark because you are going to step over somebody and kill them if you do not. So when that priest went in there, he had to stand still. He was in the place of ministry, but he could not yet see everything clearly. So he waited until his eyes adjusted to the dark. That is a picture of some of you. You walked into this church, and you come in from the world, or maybe you come in from churches that did not, it was the sunlight of this old life, and you are now into a place where there is ministry, and you

just have to stand still for a few minutes. You have to grow a little bit, and you have to let your eyes get accustomed to the difference of the light. In that area, everybody did the ministry.

But up in the corner right before you went into the Holy of Holies, there was a censer of incense. That is a picture of our prayer life. I told you that the candlesticks had to be lit every, they could not go out. They had to be lit. The incense had to stay lit. Where they got the fire for that, lighting of that incense, and got the fire for that was off the brazen altar where the sacrifice was crucified, killed. Because real prayer and real ministry always has to go back to the place where Christ died for you on Calvary's cross. That is why 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says:

*2 Timothy 3:16-17*

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

*17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

It says "thoroughly," your new Bibles say "thoroughly." It is "thoroughly" because you have heard me teach it many, many times. It starts on the inside and then it comes out. You have to get those three basic needs met in your life first from Him. You grow up, and you make those three basic things that He needs fulfilled in His life. Your marriage is a picture of that. Your marriage today is an exact picture of your relationship with Jesus Christ. You do not meet His needs anymore, and you meet hers. You do not know how to minister to the Lord. You do not even know how to minister to your wife. You do not understand His sensitivity of His spirit. You have no idea of hers. You do not realize that you have to work at meeting them first instead of demanding she meets you on equal terms. If God would have done that to you and me, we would all have been a mess. You are strong at the infirmities of the weak. He was strong. I was weak. He bore my infirmities and fulfilled my three needs first. She is the weaker vessel. You have to fulfill hers first before you can expect her to fulfill yours. What foreign doctrine is that?

## VI. Conclusion: Fulfilling God's Plan

Next week we are going to look at the last chapter. We are going to see some insight into Paul himself. We are going to see, as he is closing his book, he reveals who he really is, how he looks at things, how he deals with things, and there are some great things in this chapter. Let me say this to you: do what you want to do. I would not go another day. I would not go another hour. I would do one single thing today before I found out what it means in the Bible to minister unto the Lord. He has some needs. He has physical needs. He needs a body. He has emotional needs. He needs you not to grieve Him, and He needs to be ministered to. Think about it. I cannot even imagine somebody trying to minister before the Lord without ministering to the Lord. This is the state of Christianity today. All we talk about being God's people, we talk about being Christ-like, but in reality, the Christ of the Bible is so far from where our lives are as Christians. We just go through the motions. We are all like the little rats in a little maze that are just trying to get the cheese at the end of the tunnel, which is our heaven. We bump our noses and twist our ankles and bump into everything when God says you do not have to do that. God has a plan for your life. The only decision you have got to make is, "Am I going to fulfill it or am I not?" But if you

decide to, you have got to do it His way. He does not care where you have been or what you have done. He wants you to learn the biblical principles that you fulfill those three things in His life first as He has fulfilled them in yours.

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