

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Sunday 9/2/2012

We are reading the book of 2 Corinthians because we are getting ready to kick off after the first of the year, taking a group of men and women who really want to be part of a ministry that is going to be able to work one-on-one with people and help them. We have so many people that come in, so many people that have struggles in their life, and many of them get saved. We want to be able to meet them on whatever level their spiritual issues are. We have been around now for a while, and we have a good base in the Bible, and many of you are ready to move into that next arena of ministry. So we have been coming through this book because 2 Corinthians is the handbook of ministry. It really gives us chapter by chapter everything that we need to know.

When we get into 2 Corinthians chapter 5, we have been dealing with our perspective on ministry. I will tell you that there are three different distinct perspectives that this chapter gives us. First of all, in chapter 5, verses 1 through 11, we saw the perspective of the judgment seat of Christ: our relationship and how we should view the fact that someday we are going to stand before God and we are going to give an account for what we have done with what God has given us after we have been saved. The second aspect that we looked at last week was chapter 5, verses 12 through 16. You should have these broken down in your Bible now. That is our perspective of the ministry, how we look at what God has called us to do. Of course, that is vital.

Now today, we are going to look at chapter 5, verses 17 through 21, and this is really going to be an introduction to it. I want to begin what I think probably is the single greatest aspect of your Christian life as far as your walk with the Lord. So we are going to start to talk about this today, and this is why I want to take the time to get it laid out so that you understand it. When you start to work with people, when you start to help people, you are going to use this over and over and over again. If you are here and you are somebody who has just gotten saved, or maybe you just got plugged back into the Bible, then this is going to be invaluable to you because it is going to help you get a better understanding of where you are at. Getting this down, or not getting this down, when you start to see what we are going to talk about, as far as I am concerned, in my opinion, this is the number one reason why people do not make it past two or three years and go into churches. We have all seen it all of our lives. I know I have been in the ministry many years, and I have seen it where people come. They profess to get saved. You start to see them come to church, and then shortly thereafter, a year, two years, many times six months, even a couple of months, you never see them again. Something happens in a person's life that makes that transpire when they do not get what they need to get. I am going to show you that today.

As you work with people, this is stuff that you must get down. You can look at this today. If you are going to count yourself as someone who is going to get into this aspect of ministry, then you need to look at this today as a class for you. You need to look at this today as something that between this week and next week, you need to get down. It will save you a lot of time when we get a little farther into it after the first of the year, but you are going to use this material all the time, and you need to understand it. As I said, if you are just a young Christian, you will have the opportunity, I think if you get this down and learn some things today, you have an opportunity to

grow today in just a short time that you are here, maybe what would take you six months to a year just plodding along and going through the Bible.

I have an open policy in our church that anybody that wants to study the Bible, I will spend an hour a week with. Now it is probably every other week, sometimes every month, because a lot of people come and take advantage of that. But that is one of the greatest things that I ever did. I will tell you why it is, and I say this to you guys all the time, and it is open to anybody. You do not have to be a member of the church. If you have questions about the Bible, or you want to come in and just get an update on some things you are studying, it does not matter. The reason why that is so important is this: when you come over, and I say it all the time, we will spend an hour together. You will ask me maybe nine or ten different things that we will lay out and go through. When you leave after just one hour, you probably are farther ahead than you would have been if you had just stayed plucking along with it, trying to figure it out yourself. It might have taken you six months to a year to get it. Anytime you can go in with a number of things that you want to know and you want to learn, and you get those answers, it facilitates everything about your Christian life. You leave with eight or nine things under your belt that all connect back to other things in the Bible. That is vital in doing that. That is what we are going to do today and next week. We do it every week, but in particular, you are going to see how important this is because the third aspect that we are going to talk about and get our perspective on is ourselves. That will be 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 17 through 21.

I. The Critical Issue: How God Sees You

Now I said, in my own opinion, this is the number one issue that is the most underlying issue why God's people do not make it: not seeing themselves as God sees them and not understanding what really changed about them the day they got saved. It is a fundamental issue. It is like trying to study American history without a concept of understanding of our founding fathers. It is impossible. Trying to recognize what God has done in your life and trying to find your way to be what God wants you to be without fundamentally understanding what changed about you the day you got saved, how God looks at you at this point, and most important, how you should view yourself.

I deal with a lot of people, have for many, many years. That is one of the main problems that people have. People come up in bad childhoods. They come up in bad relationships. Many times their parents have told them that they are stupid, they are no good, and that they are worthless. They grow up in that environment, and then when they get to 18 or 19, that is the opinion they have of themselves. I have seen women in abusive relationships. I have seen men in abusive relationships where the other spouse will always be telling that person, "You are ugly, you are fat, you are stupid, you are dumb, you are all of these things." It forms what people say about us. It forms our opinion about ourselves when you hear it day after day after day.

When a person gets saved, the verse we are going to talk about today is a powerful verse. What happens is, you get saved, if you do not change in time and you still go in that mindset that you are ugly, or you are stupid, or you are dumb, or you are ineffective, or whatever it is, if at some point in your life, if you do not learn to look at yourself and see yourself now as God sees you,

this is what will defeat you. The fact that you just get saved does not solve all of your problems. The fact that you get saved gives you the ability to solve all your problems, but they just do not go away. When I start to work with people, many times they have a very bad self-image of themselves. Many times they have a very fragile one because they look at themselves through the mold that has been formed by what their parents or friends or other people have said about them. Once you get saved, it is simply not true anymore. Not seeing themselves as God sees them and not understanding what really changed about them the day they got saved.

It is a true statement, and I say it all the time: man never leaves a man any better than he finds him. That is an absolute true statement. Absolutely true. The world never leaves a person better than it finds them.

II. Three Levels of Problems and Biblical Models

In dealing with people, and I have told you this before, when you deal with people, I classify problems with people in three levels. I do that based on a model in the Bible that I am going to give you here that I do not think I have ever really given you before. You want to get that down when we get there. I look at people's problems and I graduate them in three levels.

1. You will have some people that will come into church and they will have issues, and they are really not major issues. They will struggle with some things in life, and many times it is just the fact that they have never been in the right place at the right time with the right Bible to get what they want. They are frustrated, and maybe their life is kind of a dead-end street, but not because they have got any major sin in their life, simply because of the fact that they are looking for something, and when they find it, they go to work, and it is very easy. Many of you deal with people like that, and I call that Level One.
2. On Level Two, now you have a few more serious issues. On Level Two, you have people who are dealing with maybe a marital problem, or they are dealing with self-image problems, or they have maybe a sin problem that they are struggling with. Many times we deal with people that are in that level.
3. Then you have the third level, and the third level is major issues. The third level is what you find in the Bible where it talks about what we talk about as satanic attacks or satanic strongholds. Maybe it is a drug addiction. Maybe it is an alcohol addiction. Maybe it is some personal problem that really has a deep hold on you that you are trying to struggle through.

In dealing with people, you are going to see these three levels all the time. Helping people, all you are doing, in dealing with people, all that you are doing is trying to undo in their life what the world has done. That is all you are really doing. There is no great magical formula to helping people. The world never leaves a man better than it finds him. You are going to find in just a second that people get into three levels of problems. Your job and my job is simply to help them undo, on whatever level they are on, what the world has done to them.

I say that because there are three great models in the Bible. Some people are Level One, some people are Level Two, some people are Level Three. The great truth is that in the Bible, in three particular places in the Gospels, you find three people who represent what I am talking about

today. You find three people who, when you read the stories, they are dead. When they are dead, the Lord comes in, and the Lord resurrects them and brings them back to life.

Now, let me explain this to you. You are going to find in the Bible, especially in the Gospels, that every story you find about a dead person who gets life, it is a picture of an unsaved person who gets saved. A dead person may be physically dead in our story, but we know the Bible illustrates that by there was a time before you and I were saved that you and I were dead in trespasses and sins. We were dead to Christ. We were dead to the things of God. We were dead as far as any spiritual thing in us. But then there was a day when we found the Lord Jesus Christ as our own personal Savior. At that day, the Bible says we pass from death unto life, out of the darkness, into the light. God saved us, and by saving us, He resurrected us from this old filthy world and the death that we were in. Now He gives us a new life in Christ Jesus. Every time you find that in the Bible, you can just take it for granted. That is the spiritual picture. The spiritual picture of a dead man coming to life is a picture of you and me before we were saved. We were dead in trespasses and sins, but when we got saved, we became alive in Christ Jesus. They are marvelous studies.

In the New Testament, there are three particular ones. This is where I get my concept of the three levels because these three people show us they are all dead, they all have an encounter with the Lord, and they all get life. But each one of them is a little bit different as you study them.

- The First Level: Jairus' Daughter
- The Second Level: The Widow's Son at Nain
- The Third Level: Lazarus

III. Two Vital Understandings for the Christian Life

In every case, whether it is Level One, Level Two, or Level Three, the person you are dealing with, or yourself if you are here this morning, will have to in time get to an understanding of two things in life. If you do not get these two things down, you are not going anywhere. The devil will always defeat you. There will always be somebody in your world that will stop you. You will always let somebody else say something to you that will hurt your feelings or do this or do that or crush your spirit. You will never move beyond that until you get these next two things down that you have to get in time. When you are dealing with people, when you are helping people, when I am helping people, this is my underlying goal.

I have lots of people that come in to see me over the years that have self-identity problems, to the point that some of them cannot even function being in crowds. They cannot be around people at all. That is the extreme case of it. But I am telling you, the only way you are going to fix that is to understand these next two things that everybody needs to get to in your life inside.

4. The first one is understanding how God views you now that you are saved. That is vital. That does not sound like much, but it is everything in the Christian life: how God views you now that you are saved. Absolutely vital.
5. The second thing is how you view yourself now that you are saved.

Those two things will make you or break you no matter who you think you are, what you know about the Bible, because the greatest aspect of this chapter for ministry and doing what you want to do is the perspective of how you and I view ourselves. How you and I view ourselves. Life is never going to give you a fair shot. Life is always going to give you the short end of the stick. That is the way it is supposed to go. People get into ministry, and they think the ministry is grandiose and great. Well, being in a ministry is an incredible, great thing, and it is the greatest job, as far as I am concerned. But I will tell you something: there is no glory in it in any way, shape, or form if you do what you are supposed to do. Because everybody in the world is going to take a cheap shot at you and hate you. Life is going to treat you the same way. Life is going to do the exact same thing. If you are not secure in how God looks at you, then in time you are going to worry about how everybody else looks at you instead of how God looks at you. If you are not secure in how you view yourself in Christ, then the first time somebody comes up and says, "You are ugly, you are dumb, you are stupid," or some terrible thing that they are going to say, you are going to let it bother you. You are going to get to the point where it is going to take from you what God has for you. Why? Because you let what that person thinks about you override what God thinks about you. The very fact is, you do not know what God thinks about you. Important. You may never smoke, you may never drink, you may never do all the great sins that we say will cancel you out of ministry. It does not matter. These two will kill you before you get started because they have to do with how you view God and how you view yourself.

One of the simplest forms that I showed you a couple of weeks ago, and I have told it to you many, many times, is that little format: sinner, son, and servant. I like putting things in little three-point phrases so I can remember them. But that little thing right there shows you how God looks at you: sinner, son, and servant. You would be surprised how many people do not know how God looks at them. I told you, when God died on the cross, He looked at you as a sinner. The moment you get saved, He no longer looks at you as a sinner. Now He looks at you as His son, and He deals with you as His son. Now, once you go to the judgment seat of Christ, then He does not deal with you as a sinner. He does not deal with you as a son; He deals with you as a servant. Understanding that little basic three-point outline begins to form and bring into focus how God looks at you. Now it is much more complicated than that. Well, not really, but that is a little more we have got to talk about.

God's people today, you have heard me say it many times, and it is a true statement: God's people today know a lot of things about the Bible, but God's people today simply do not know the Bible. They just do not. It is the same way in our Christian lives, in our walk. We view our relationship with God through a system of terms. We do. We view our relationship with God. We talk about being saved. We talk about being redeemed. We talk about being born again. Somebody says, "I am washed in the blood." We talk about the word salvation or regeneration. You see, we view our Christian life and our relationship with God through a system of terms that we really do not understand. That is why we are so shallow. We know the words, but we have no idea how to apply them or what they really mean. The words "born again," "salvation," those are Christian words we recognize, but we do not know how to explain them or how they really affected us. That is why we have so much heresy in the church. That is why there is so much bad teaching. That is why you have the ideas and the teaching that you can lose your salvation. When a person

teaches you that you can lose your salvation, I do not know if you know it or not, but I already know at that point I am dealing with somebody who has no clue about the Bible and what really happened the day you got saved. Because if you really knew what happened the day you got saved and you knew who you were in Christ, you would never even entertain that idea. Never would.

People talk about, "Well, have you got the second grace?" People talk about, "Well, have you got the second blessing?" I always say, "No, I have only been married once. I have only had the first one." They come up with all these ideas that have nothing to do with reality in the Bible. The truth of the matter is, when you understand what happened the day you got saved, somebody says, "Have you been baptized in the Holy Ghost since you believed?" Yes, I have, the moment I did believe. But you have people out there who think that you get saved and then you get the Holy Ghost later. Do you know why that is? Because they do not know what happened to you the day you got saved. That is the problem. That is the problem. All because God's people do not really understand the biblical process of salvation or what really happened the day they got saved. They cannot define it.

If you are saved here this morning, what is different about you? Anything? What happened inside you the instant you got saved? What transpired in that moment? What changed from the second that you were a sinner, now that when you got saved, you are now God's child? What is the process? I do not want the terminology. What was the process that transpired? Do you know if somebody came up to you and said, "What happened the day you got saved?" would you be relegated to those basic terms? "Well, I got born again." "Well, I got redeemed." Those are terms. What really happened? What changed about you? What made? Obviously there is a change in your life. It means you are here this morning instead of at a bar. Maybe you were at a bar last night, but I am still glad you came this morning. Something changed. You care about the things of God now where you did not care about them before. Something changed. Something happened. Can you explain it? You see, when you cannot explain it, then there is no way you are going to know now how God looks at you. You say, "Well, I am God's child." Certainly you are. But can you explain how you are God's child? Can you explain what physically and spiritually took place inside you that made you God's child? No, you cannot. So you know the terminology, but you view your relationship through that terminology all your life, but you cannot explain it to yourself and certainly cannot explain it to somebody else. This is the problem. This is what happened. What happened to your soul? Anything? What happened to your body? Anything? What effect did salvation have on your spirit? Anything? You are a body, soul, and spirit. Are they all the same? What is the difference?

IV. The Trichotomy of Man and the Operation of Salvation

The answer to all of that above is found obviously in the Bible. As you come through the Bible, there are some great books that begin to lay it out. The book of Romans is a tremendous book for telling us what we should believe and why we should believe it, and it shows you that process. The book of Colossians, especially Colossians chapter 2, the book of Ephesians, an incredible book that tells you about the process and defines the process of your body, soul, and spirit. The

Bible says all the way back in Genesis chapter 1 that when God made you, He made you a trichotomy. God made man after God's own image. God is a Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. So when God made man, He made him after that image. Man has a body, a soul, and his spirit. Each one of those lines up to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It is a trichotomy.

Do you know what happened? Adam sinned in the garden, and when he sinned in the garden, he lost that image. So now Adam is in a place where he is in a fallen image. He has a body. He has a soul, but now he has a dead spirit. In the Old Testament, Adam's body and his soul were stuck together; they were one. They were stuck together. That is why the Bible says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." That is why you want to remember in the Old Testament, they will use the word body and soul interchangeably because in the Old Testament after the fall of Adam, they are stuck together.

Now, do you know what happened the day you got saved? Are you going to get the whole process today? One, if you are a young Christian, you need to know this. Two, if you are going to work with me with people, you certainly need to know it for where we are going next week. This is like an introduction. The process, the time of salvation, it is a miracle. It is unbelievable. Something happened. What happened was the Bible calls it an operation made without hands. The Bible calls it a circumcision. What God did the moment you got saved is He took the Word of God and He separated your soul from your flesh. Where before you were stuck together and you were a sinner, God could not fellowship with you. He could have nothing to do with you because you are in sin and He is holy. God had to make a way because He wanted to fellowship with you and me. He wanted to redeem His fallen creation. So what He did was, He came down and He made a way, and when He made that way through the cross of Calvary, then at the point of salvation, something changes. The thing that changes about you is a spiritual operation called a circumcision made without hands.

Circumcision. That sounds familiar. Back in the Old Testament. Yes, remember that it was Abraham that was given by God a concept of circumcision. What was circumcision in the Old Testament? You took that baby after it was born, and you took a knife and you cut away on the part of that little boy's anatomy that had to do with birth and had to do with seed. You took the flesh from it. You did it on the eighth day. Now doctors will tell you that a baby's blood begins to coagulate and clot only on the eighth day. I have no argument with that. That is probably true. I am not a doctor, but I am the best one practicing without a license. That may be true, but I am going to tell you this: in the Bible, the number eight stands for new beginnings. Our verse today is, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The day you got saved, you got spiritually circumcised, your flesh from your soul. You became a new creature. All things became new, a new beginning. So in the Old Testament type, which pictures that in a physical sense, they did it on the eighth day. It is the beauty of the way the Bible goes together.

Now that operation made without hands, through a spiritual knife, cuts away the flesh from the soul. Now you are two personalities. Now you are a schizo. You go to your psychiatrist, and he says, "You have a second personality." You do. You have an old nature and you have a new

nature. You are a schizo. There is nothing wrong with having two natures. It is when you have a third one you have to watch out for. I talked to one lady one time who had fourteen different personalities living inside her. I said, "Well, let me talk to the one that will understand what I am saying the most. I do not need the other thirteen." It is all right to have two. When you got saved, you now have a new nature and an old nature. Paul calls it the old man, the new man. We know what they are. The old nature, we just did not know how we got it. The old nature is the flesh. The new nature is your soul. It is okay. This is where your conflict is. Paul says the things I do not want to do, the things that I do, and the things I should do, the things I do not want to do, they are the ones that I do. I am just a mess all the way over. Do you know why? Because he felt that battle. You and I have that battle. That is why before you got saved, you really did not care what you did wrong. But the moment you get saved, it makes a difference now. The moment you get saved, you may not be right. If you have been saved this morning, you may not be right with God here today. But I will say something for you: you know you are not right with God. Do you know why? Because the day you got saved, not only did He separate the soul from the flesh, but then the Bible says in Ephesians 4:30, He takes your soul, because that is eternal. Your flesh is this old body; it is going back to the grave. So He separates the eternal part from the physical part, and then He seals your soul with His Holy Spirit. Now He can fellowship with you. He has separated the one from the other, the filthy one from the clean one, and then He sealed it, saved it, and now He fellowships through that soul.

Ephesians 1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.

See that? Now that is a great title, "Holy Spirit of promise." In other words, when you got the Holy Spirit of God, there are some promises that come with it. We will talk about that a little bit later on. Now get this. The fact that your soul has been separated from your flesh and now your soul is sealed with the Holy Spirit gives you the ability to fellowship with God. That is how it works. It is just that simple. So next time somebody asks you, now you know. It is just that simple. I would go home and I would look up Colossians. We will get to some more verses here. I would look up all these verses, and I would get a better understanding. You need to come over and help me lay it out for you. Thursday night, I will be glad to go into any more detail. Even though we are not done yet with it today, we will get some more, but I want to help you get this.

V. Resolving the Apparent Contradiction in 1 John

Let me give you a great verse. Turn over to 1 John, not the Gospel, but the one back there before Revelation, 1 John chapter 3. This shows you what I am just talking about. Then I want to show you the problems we have today and why we have them. 1 John chapter 3. You want to learn this. 1 John 3:9, one of the most misapplied and misused verses in all the Bible.

1 John 3:9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Now you see that? That verse right there says that if you are born of God here this morning, you cannot sin. I will say it again. If you are born of God here this morning and you are saved, that

Bible says you cannot sin. Now I am going to give you a problem. Same book, first chapter. 1 John chapter 1, verse 8. I just gave you 1 John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." Now look at this one.

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Wow, what are you going to do with that? One verse says, "If you are born of God, you do not commit sin." The other verse says, "If I just said that, I am deceiving myself, and the truth is not in me." Wow, contradiction. Now these two verses have caused many a heart attack and severe cases of indigestion for many Bible preachers and teachers. It really has. Here is how they handle it. "Well, since these two verses contradict each other, one verse says, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.' The other one says, 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.' We cannot have a contradiction in the Bible." So, I mean, I will tell you this. If I do not know where you go to church, if you do not go here, and I probably did not do this because this is a cheap shot at the guy that is preaching where you go, but this is what you have to do. The true test of a pastor's mettle: what he does with these two verses. Ask him. Go up to him and say, "Hey, preacher, I really enjoyed your sermon. Did not understand much of it, but thank you for it anyhow." He will say, "Well, thank you very much. Did you get your offering in?" "Yeah, I did." "Okay, good." "1 John 3:9 says this. 1 John 1:8 says this. What is the difference?" Do you know what he is going to tell you? I am going to tell you what he is going to tell you. You see, they come to the point where they do not know what to do with it. They do not add up. So one of them must be wrong. God forbid that it could be that I did not understand or read it and did not study those to show myself approved. So when they get those two verses, one that says that "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin," the other one says, "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," you know what they do? They go to 1 John chapter 3, verse 9, and they say, "Well, that is a mistranslation. It does not mean 'commit sin.' It should say 'practice sin.'" Now, see, that works because as a Christian, you should not practice sin. But we all practice it very well. If sin was a trumpet, we would all be named Harry James. This is what happens when they do not know who Harry James is. It does not say "practice." In the new Bibles, they say, "Well, that is a mistranslation." So they take out "commit" and they say, "Well, we know that we commit sin because verse one says that, so we cannot have that. So it must be wrong. God forbid I could be wrong. It must be wrong. So we will change it to 'practice.'" Well, I have some news for you, pal. In some places in the new Bibles, they say, "Well, we will take out 'commit' and we will say 'should not continue in sin.'" Well, you should not continue in sin, but I have news for you. The verse stands. If you are saved this morning, you do not commit sin. I will explain it to you in a second. I am not done yet. I am having some fun right now. So they take 1 John chapter 3, verse 9, and they take the word "commit" and change it to "practice" or "continue in." Now they do that because, as I have already said, they do not have a clue of what happened to you the day you got saved. When you do not understand the process that I just walked you through very basically, I am going to go through it real deep here in a little bit. When you do not understand the concept of that operation, spiritual circumcision, you do not see that thing go when you see those two verses. It has got to be a contradiction because I do not understand what really happened.

I live in Raytown, the intellectual capital of the world, the rival of Alexandria, Egypt. Last week we were sitting there, and I did not even see him. I was downstairs. The bar was upstairs, and she said, "We got a CD." It was given out by a church of area pastors. I think it was probably because they want people to come to their church. Coming down through there, it was a... they had one guy who was preaching a salvation message. It was not a bad message. Then you had eight or nine other pastors that all chimed in. On this little DVD, it said "11 Most Asked Questions That People Have." I know what they were doing. They were putting that out there because it is not like fishing with a real fishing rod. This is like a trot line. You put it across there, put bait every six feet, and some catfish are going to run into it sooner or later. They are throwing these out there hoping somebody says, "Well, that is my problem," and then you will go to this church. I appreciate that. I really do. But I want to tell you something. I sat there and listened to that thing, and I thought to myself, "If this is what Christianity is today, I know why people do not want to go to church." This was the goofiest, stupidest, lame-brained stuff I ever heard in my life. I mean, they were nice guys, I am sure. I am sure they are wonderful fathers, wonderful husbands. They are the greatest thing in the world. They need to go to barber school because every one of them taught... One guy is up there, and he is saying, "Can we trust the Bible?" That is a question. "Can you trust the Bible?" On the back of the screen, they are flashing the NIV Study Bible. "Can you trust the Bible?"

One guy gets up there, and he talks about why things happen to people. He is up there talking about how that, why bad things happen to people. He is saying, "I, people ask me all the time about 9/11 and a great tragedy of 3,000 people got killed in 9/11." He says, "I tell them." He says, "I am sure that God was up in heaven, and He was weeping as those planes went into them towers." I am thinking to myself, "This guy knows absolutely nothing about how God judges nations." The Bible says, "The wicked shall be cast into hell, and all the nations that forget God." This nation, as much as I love it and fought for it once and would fight for it again, has turned her back on God and is suffering now the rebuke of a holy God that is not going to allow every nation in time... Israel got out of fellowship and got away from God in the Old Testament. God brought another nation in to judge them. Do you know where those nations were? Same ones that flew those planes in on 9/11. Now I am sorry for the 3,000 people. I would do anything in the world. If I would have had an anti-aircraft gun, I would have shot them down. If I had been flying in a jet with you, we would have knocked them out of the sky. But it is what it is. It is what it is. People do not understand today. These guys get up there and talk about all of these things. Not one of them believed. Not one of them could explain what happened to you the day you got saved. The guy they gave the message about salvation... I mean, this guy is so stupid, he trips over cordless phones. It was incredible. I mean, it probably takes this guy two hours to watch 60 Minutes. It was incredible. On and on. It was the goofiest stuff you ever heard. It had nothing to do with the Bible. I am not kidding you. I mean, the one guy, I think he thinks Taco Bell is a Mexican phone company. It was just the goofiest stuff you ever heard in your life. Ridiculous. I am thinking to myself, "Is this what Christianity is today where we give a lot of surface froth, but we do not understand?" We talk about salvation, but if you were put on the spot, you could not explain those two verses because the very Bibles you preach from have taken a verse out because you do not know what to do with it.

I am going to show you what to do with it. I am going to tell you what you do with it. When you really know what happened the day you got saved, listen, when you really understand fundamentally what transpired in your life the day you got saved, you do not have to change the Bible. You just get saved and believe it, and the Bible will change you. But we are so busy changing what God said because we do not understand it. The Bible cannot do its work.

Now let me give you some Bible this morning. When it is talking about "he that is born of God doth not commit sin," I gave you just a brief understanding of it. You probably can pick it up already. When it is talking about "he that is born of God doth not commit sin," he is talking about your soul. Your soul has been cut loose. Your soul has now been sealed on the day of redemption with the Holy Spirit of God. Your soul cannot sin. That is your new nature. Your new man, the righteousness of God in you. That is the fallen image of Adam restored to the image of God, and your soul cannot sin. So when he says in 1 John chapter 3, verse 9, "He that is born of God doth not commit sin," it is talking about your soul. When he says in 1 John chapter 1, verse 8, when he is talking about "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," he is not talking about your soul. Now he is talking about your flesh. He is talking about the old nature that will sin every day of your life if you give it the chance. The key word in 1 John 3:9 is "he that is born of God doth not commit sin." He that is born of God. My flesh was never born of God. My flesh is not born of God today. There is nothing good in my flesh. My flesh is the same flesh as Alvin Karpis and Pretty Boy Floyd. My flesh is the same flesh that Charles Manson has. My flesh is the same flesh that every hell-bound sinner has on this planet. It is my soul that got saved. It got born again. "He that is born of God doth not commit sin." My soul cannot sin. How hard is that? How hard is that? So because of that, we cannot get that basic thing. The Bible has got to be wrong. So we will change it to "practice." Yes, we do not practice. Practice makes perfect. That is why I have some perfect Christians here this morning. You have been practicing. My soul was born again through a new birth that made me a new creature in Christ Jesus. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Now see how it works.

VI. The Process of Christian Growth

I want to lay out the whole process for you here. I want you to see this thing. Now get this. Here is how it works. You have a body. You have a soul. And you have a spirit. I told you already. But just so we can get it all in a constant thing here. Before you were saved, you had a body and soul that were stuck together. They were stuck together in sin. Your spirit was dead. Because of that, you could have no fellowship with God. The Bible said that God does not hear your prayers if you are an unsaved man. Because of that, you could have no fellowship with God. You can have nothing from God. You get nothing out of the Bible. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." You do not have any of that. Absolutely no fellowship with God. No way. He is holy, and we are unholy. We are dead in trespasses and sins. But God made a way. You see, God loved man. If God ever wept any tears, it was not at 9/11. It was when His Son was hanging on the cross. This country and this world around the world today has rejected us and has rejected that and made light of it and made

fun of it and just about did everything they could to trash God and His Word. But God made a way. That way was Calvary's cross where He paid the price for you and for me.

Now watch how this thing develops. Then He promises us that the coming Holy Spirit of God is going to come when He goes back. That Holy Spirit of God is vital because that is the link that we are going to have fellowship with God with. I remember a couple of Thursdays ago I gave you in John chapter 16 the seven things the Holy Spirit of God does for you. You should have those in your Bible. You add that in here now. Half of those things were things that He did after you got saved. But we have a problem, you see, because how does a holy God? How is He going to fellowship with a sinner like me? Why would He want to? How can He do it? But here is how it works. This is what God did to get around my sin issue, to restore that fellowship at the instant of salvation. God takes the Word of God and He quickens us. He takes that operation made without hands. Colossians 2:11-12 says:

Colossians 2:11-12 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

That is not water. "Wherein also you are risen with him through faith of the operation of God." Operation of God. You see, at that split-second moment when you trusted Christ, Hebrews 4:12 says the Word of God is a sharp two-edged sword. He takes that sword, that Word of God, and He cuts through an operation made without hands, called spiritual circumcision, patterned after the Old Testament, and He divides the flesh from the soul. Then He fills the soul with God's Holy Spirit, and then He seals it, Ephesians 4 and Ephesians 1. That sealing of the Holy Spirit of God, now a holy God, He separated the filthy part and made a holy part. Now that holy God can fellowship with me through my soul where before He could not. But I still have a problem, do I not? So do you. My flesh. I still have my spirit we have to talk about, do we not?

Now here is how that works. Now that I am saved, I am going to give you "sinner, son, and servant." Here is another one. I love this one: saved, sealed, and sanctified. There you are. Now that I am saved, sealed, and sanctified. Sanctified means set apart. We always use it as a term, "Be set apart from the world," and that is true. But in a pure biblical text, it is sanctified and set apart from your flesh. I am saved, sealed, and sanctified. Now that I have those three things in my life, I have the ability to overcome everything in my life, even my flesh. You see, before you are saved, you may have all kinds of problems. You do not have the ability on your own to get out of those problems. You may put a band-aid on the problems. You may get away with it for a while. But at the end of the day, you are still the same person. You need something that is going to change your heart. That is what salvation does. Salvation is what makes the difference between you being the old person and the new person, and the process that you go through. The process that you go through. Now that you get saved, now you have the ability to overcome everything in your life. You now have the Holy Spirit of God living inside you. You now are a new creature in Christ Jesus. Old things are passed away. All things become new. You now have the ability to get everything that God has and is inside you to deal with every problem you have. But you still have your flesh. You see. You still have your flesh. That is why we struggle. That is

why you will leave here today with the best intentions to do what is right with God. This message will kind of wake you up a little bit, and you will leave here and say, "Boy, I am really going to... he is right. I am going to really do what is right." You will not be out of here fifteen minutes, and you will be thinking some old thought that you had before or doing this or thinking about that and be right back to it. It is a battle. Would it be great if you could just get saved and never have to worry about sin again? That would be wonderful. But unfortunately, it does not work that way. But you can get to that point, and the way you get to that point is by understanding your spirit.

Now most people do not understand the spirit. Most people do not understand body and soul. We talk about terminology. "I love you with all my heart." Really? This thing, it pumps blood. "I want to give you my heart." I do not know if I want it. I do not have a plastic bag to put it in. "I want to give you a piece of my mind." I love that one. Really? I have a real small bag here. Put it in. "Just give me the whole mind. I will give you a piece." See that stuff we talk about. It is like people say, "She had a nervous breakdown." A nervous breakdown means you died. When your nerves break down, you are dead. But they do not know what to call it. So they call it a nervous breakdown. "She had a nervous breakdown." Somebody said, "He has got a virus." What is a virus? I do not know what he has got, but we use the virus. It is a catch-all word. We do the same thing. "I love you with all my heart." Really? What is your heart? Somebody says, "I got it in my mind." Really? Why did you hold your head for it? How do you know that is where your mind is at? I know I have some other places where I think some people's minds are. I will not bother showing today. "Oh, my mind hurts." Really? "Oh, my mind hurts." How do you know it is here? What is your mind? Somebody says, "Well, he broke my heart." Really? With a hammer or what? What did he do to that thing? What heart? You do not certainly mean this thing here pumping blood around you, do you? Where is your heart? If you get a heart transplant and you get somebody else's heart, it can cause a problem, can it? If you do not understand my Bible.

Back in about 19... whenever the first heart transplant was performed, I was a pastor at a church. I was just an understudy there, kind of like a gopher. The senior pastor and all these guys, he called a meeting because a theological issue had now come up. The first heart transplant had been performed. I swear to God, this is the absolute truth. The guy says, "We had to have a meeting here because we now are faced with a theological dilemma." I am thinking, "Oh, what happened? The antichrist showed up?" He says, "No," he says, "We have had the first heart transplant. We must be prepared to answer to our people: if a man was saved and he now gets a heart transplant of an unsaved person, is he still saved?" Yes, I am doing what you are doing. I am looking, and I am saying, "What planet are you from?" I did not know anything about the Bible back then, but I knew that was goofy. I mean, I knew what I am teaching you now within my first six months of being saved. It is not just heart. But that is where they are at, and that is why they get to that point where they have to change it to "practice" or "commit" because they do not know what to do with it.

Now, let me talk to you about your spirit. Your spirit is like the rudder of a ship. That is the best way I can explain it. You see a big old ship out there; it is four football fields long. If you get underneath the water, there would be a rudder about a tenth of what the ship's length is. But that

rudder turns left and right. That rudder turns that ship whichever way it goes. That little rudder turns that big ship left or right. That is what it does. That is a lot what your spirit is like. I have not given you this verse yet, but in 2 Corinthians 7:1, it says:

2 Corinthians 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Now I wonder why it did not say "soul." Do you know why it did not say "soul"? It is sealed. It is already holy. See that? You do not have to perfect the soul. It is perfected, but your flesh and your spirit are something else.

Now let us talk about your spirit. We have people all the time, there are four spirits on this earth. Three of them affect me and you. The fourth one is an animal spirit, and it does not really affect us in any way, shape, or form. But you have man's spirit. That is the spirit that is in all of us. You have God's Spirit. That is the Holy Spirit. And then you have the unclean spirit, the devil's spirit. You see, as a Christian, your spirit is your free will. It really is. Your spirit is your free will. Your spirit decides which way your body, the ship, goes. You will line it up. If you line it up to God's Spirit and God's spiritual things, then your flesh is going to do what is right. If you line it up to the wrong things of this world, then it is going to go the wrong way. Whatever you line your spirit up to, either the Spirit of God or the spirit of the world, the flesh, and the devil, it is where you are going to go. The things you read, the things you hear, the music you listen to, the people you hang out with, and the things you look at all affect your spirit.

In the Bible, we talked about heart and mind. In the Bible, your heart would be your soul, but your mind would be your spirit. The Bible talks about the mind of the spirit. It is which way you go. It is how you think. You think based on what you put in your life. If you listen to garbage, you are going to be garbage. If you look at garbage, you are going to go toward garbage. This is why he says, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved," it is the Word of God that you cleanse yourself with daily and follow God's Spirit. Then the Bible says you renew the spirit of your mind, Ephesians 4:23, on a daily basis, but you get to choose. You get to choose. It is your choice. It is your choice. Free will is everything. This is where, again, a Calvinist, somebody who believes you are predestined this way... a Calvinist is somebody who never understood anything about how he got saved. The only thing a Calvinist is predestined to is predestined to be stupid. I am not kidding you. They would ask for a price check at a dollar store. They have no clue of what transpired the day you got saved. Nothing, nothing, nothing. Your spirit is everything. When you lean your spirit toward the things of God, listen to the right kind of music, hang out with the right kind of people. Remember back with David and Saul? Saul had those swings back and forth. At one moment he wanted to kill David. At one moment he was loving David. Do you not read back there it was because the spirit that he had at that point, the Spirit of God left him, and an evil spirit came, and he wanted to kill David. Then when David came and played music, the evil spirit left, and the God's Spirit came back. Music affects the spirit. What you see affects your spirit. That is why as a Christian, you need to guard what you hear, what you see, what you read, and what you listen to as far as music is concerned, because it affects your spirit, and that spirit, like that rudder, turns that ship one way or the other. When you hear Benny Goodman play "In the Mood," you do not think he is talking about being in the mood for a

prayer meeting. The music tells you what it is. Yet when you heard what Danny sang this morning, "I'd Rather Have Jesus," it is kind of hard to get any kind of worldly arousal out of it when you listen to that kind of music. Do you know why? It is your spirit. So what the Christian world has done today, and what the devil has done through them, he has taken Christian music that used to be solid, old hymns of the faith, and now he has made them worldly and put them in a Christian book. That is why you have such shallow Christians with shallow spirits because they not only have a shallow Bible, but they have shallow music. It is not hard to figure out.

VII. Building on the Foundation of Salvation

Now we saw that in 1 Corinthians chapter 3. So now we know we have a body, soul, and spirit. We have pretty much defined that. We know how it is separated out. Now watch, here we go. Let us continue on here. We saw the last couple of weeks that 1 Corinthians chapter 3, when you get saved, you lay a foundation. That foundation we know now is Jesus Christ. Then as a wise master builder, you build on that foundation. We talked about gold, silver, and precious stone. Now let me show you how the process should be. We already know the day you got saved, the Holy Spirit of God came in, an operation made without hands took place, and it separated your soul from your flesh. He renewed your spirit and gave it life. He sealed your soul with the Holy Spirit of God. Now you are an old nature and a new nature, an old man and a new man. Now you have the ability to fellowship with God where before you did not. The day you got saved, that all took place. You also laid a foundation on your life. Now the rest of your life, you are going to build on that foundation.

Let me show you how this thing works. Let me show you why people do not make it. This is the exact same process when you start to work with people and help them. Maybe you do not give it to them all out in one day, but in your mind, this is what you are doing. This is what you are doing. If you do not come to the place in your life, ladies and gentlemen, where you understand how God looks at you and you understand how you view yourself in Christ, this is why you are not going anywhere.

Here is the process:

6. After salvation, you should get disciplined. The basics of God and the Bible, what really happened to you. Our discipleship lessons here that we put together, I put together thirty-five years ago, are basically ten lessons. Do you know what the first lesson is? I practice what I preach. Do you know what the first lesson is? What happened to you the day you got saved. Because that is the first thing you have to know. I do not want you going anywhere in this church, doing anything, until you first figure out what happened the day you got saved because it is going to form the basis of how you look at yourself. Then down the line, "Now that I am saved, what is my relationship to the Bible? Now that I am saved, what is my relationship to the church? Now that I am saved, what is my relationship to other Christians, my family, my giving, my government, my job, the other people in my life?" You see, it forms the basic foundation after you get saved. That starts to feed the new nature. It starts to feed your spirit. At the same time, hook up with people who are like-minded, who love God,

love the Word of God; they feed your spirit. Iron sharpens iron. We talked about it many, many times.

7. Then as you continue to grow spiritually, you start coming through the Bible. You start coming to Thursday night, start listening to what I say and coming over and talking to me, it is a natural process. The next thing you are going to do, you are going to find out that when you start coming through the Bible, once you get saved, once you get some fundamental things down, 2 Peter 1:5 says that there are seven things now you add to your faith. See, it is a building process. When I work with people, that is why I try to get them disciplined. Once I get them disciplined, I do not know how many of you are already teaching somebody the seven things that changed about you the day you got saved. We use it all the time. It is going to be a mainstay. Discipleship is part of that. Then there comes a point in your life where you graduate from that, and you start to learn the seven things you have to add to your faith. If you do not add these things to your faith, it is going to be a breakdown. Christian life is not hard when you have a Bible that you believe. You start, you get saved, you understand that process, and then you begin to grow. You get disciplined. Then the Bible says there are seven things you have to add to your faith. How much easier could it be? He even tells you what they are. He tells you virtue. He tells you knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity. Now we do not have time to go through all of those today, but I am telling you, I can sum it up for you. All those are character qualities of Christ that you build into yourself that affect your spirit, that then affects the new nature and keeps you growing for the Lord and lets that old nature just go away. Though it will never completely go away, it will go away.
8. Then you continue to grow. You get the seven things you add to your faith. You begin to work those in your life. You begin to see those, and I will just say this, almost without exception, everybody in this church that came in and got saved the last two or three years, this is the process. You may not have known it. You may be in it right now and still not knowing it, but this is the process that you are in. This is the process that you go through in this church because it is the process the Bible says works, and we are here to help you. We are here to help you in time as you continue to grow. You learn. You add seven things to your faith. You get a little more into the Word of God. You get a little more developed. You find there are seven things that God hates. Now, you know what you do with that. Once you get yourself to that point, you hate those things. Do you know why some of God's people can never get out of the sin in their life they are in? Do you know why it is so easy? Whatever your problem may be, and I do not even know that you have one, but if you have one today, whatever your problem is, you will never get out of it or get over it until you hate it as much as God does. How much simpler can it be?
9. Then you continue to grow. It would not be fair to find out the seven things that God hates. Then you start coming through the Bible, and you find out there are seven things that He loves. Do you love God this morning? Do you? Could you name the seven things that He loves? See how reality comes in. We love God. "Oh, I love God." What are the seven things that God loves? There are seven things that He hates, but there are seven things that He loves. When you hate the things that He hates, you know what you will do in time? Just guess. You will love the things that He loves.

As you grow, God begins to use you because Philippians 1:6 says that God has begun a good work in you, performing it until the day of Jesus Christ. As you grow, you will learn how to do things because the Bible says Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." He takes those things, and He continues to grow. As you keep yielding that spirit to God's Spirit and the things of God, you start to put the Bible together, and you see God's overall plan. Remember Bible Basics? Bible Basics was taking you. Now you look back on it, you see it. Bible Basics was taking a bunch of you after you went through a lot of this stuff in a timely fashion. Then I added another piece of the puzzle, and I showed you God's plan on the whole Bible from beginning to end, because you were now ready to get that and ready to grasp that. There comes a point in your life as you build this thing and you get it, and you start feeding that spirit, and you start getting the things of God that it builds you the right way. As you see God's plan and what He has done and is doing, here it comes. In time you get to the place, and most of God's people never get here. In time you get to the place where you see yourself in this plan. Then the two areas come into focus. This is where God's people have to get. This is why this great verse, 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," becomes relevant. Because now you see how God views you in light of His Word. At the same time, you now view yourself in light of God's Word and His plan. This is why the third aspect of this perspective is ourselves. You have to see who you are in Christ. You do not understand who you are in Christ and see yourself until you understand what happened the day you got saved. You are a child of God. You are an aristocracy of heaven. You are a child of the King. You are going to reign with Him someday. You are in every sense of the word. It changed about you all because God came down and made a way, and that little operation of God made without hands.

So yes, the Bible is true: "He that is born of God doth not commit sin." And yes, the Bible is true: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Because one is dealing with a soul that was cut away and sealed and sinless, the other one is dealing with your flesh that will always give you problems. The spirit in the middle is what you use to go back and forth by what you yield it to. When you put it toward the things of God, then you live for Him. When you put it toward the things of the world, then you live for the world. It is just that simple. It is your choice. It is your choice. You learn the greatest teaching in the Bible to us as Christians that after you get saved, there is a way God looks at you. When you understand how God sees you and you view God the right way, and you know what transpired, and you know now internally what transpired and happened, nobody will ever talk you out of anything spiritually ever again. You will have the assurance, the self-confidence, everything you need to know who you are in Christ, and no one will talk you out of it because you will know now.

Next week, after this introduction, I am going to bring you through the seven things that changed about you the day you got saved, bringing this whole thing of viewing yourself to a crystal clear focus. Seven distinct things changed about you the very instant you got saved that made you a new creature in Christ Jesus, that old things were passed away. This lesson and today's go hand in hand, and you will use it every day in your own life personally. But if you are going to work with people, if you are going to try to help people get to the place in their life where they become productive for the Lord, I do not care what their problem is. I do not care if it is Level One, Level

Two, or Level Three. You will never get them past whatever they are struggling with until they first understand who they are in Christ and see themselves as God sees them and see themselves in the plan of God. If you are a young Christian here next week, along with this week, I would get this down. Get whatever help you have to get. If you have to talk to me, if you have to bring it up Thursday night in the question and answer, whatever, I would not let these next two weeks escape you. If you do not do anything else in your life, I would get this down. You have it as clear as it could ever be laid out today, and you need to get it.

Now, if you are a little bit further down the line and you are going to work with me or you are intending to work with me, you better get this down. In fact, if I were you, I would pick up a partner somewhere along the line and write out a lesson on this. If you have not already taught or been teaching it, I would write out a lesson on this, and I would start teaching it back and forth to somebody else that is going to do it so you can get it down. Because you are going to need this royally when we get to that point. You might as well get it done now and save yourself a lot of headache because you are going to have to understand how to use this, and you will not understand how to use it until you understand how it works with you. All right. Well, let us have a word of prayer. As I said, that was more of a teaching lesson today. I got some little preaching into it, but get it down. It ought to help you understand where you are. You ought to leave here now looking at everything differently. I like it.