

96-07-13a

Okay, as we prepare to continue our study in Romans this evening, let's take a moment to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and seek the ministry of God the Holy Spirit as we study these things, shall we pray? Father, we thank you as always for the wonderful privilege that we have of being alive in this age and of having been saved by your grace and being entered into your plan and your purpose on the positive side. We thank you for the union that we share with Jesus Christ and all of the great potential that that creates in our lives. We pray tonight as we continue our study of Romans that God the Holy Spirit will enlighten us and that as a result of studying these things, we will have resources in our soul that will enable us to live in a way that pleases you and reflects your glory.

We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. We pick up tonight in Romans chapter 8 and the concept that we studied last time is in verse 1, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. This is quite a statement, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The first thought that we have when we think about this verse is that this is talking about the deliverance from the lake of fire, that because we have accepted Christ, we have been delivered from that condemnation. What we saw last time and what we are going to briefly review tonight is the fact that that is not really what Paul is talking about. That is a true statement, but what we have seen in Romans is Paul talking about the Christian life, the Christian life under the law and the Christian life under grace or under the new covenant and the new promises that pertain ever since Christ came and the church age began.

One of the ways we know this, if you just check back in chapter 7 and look at verses 4 and 5, actually verses 4 through 6 here of chapter 7, this is where Paul establishes what he is talking about in chapter 7 and chapter 8. He says in 7, 4, Therefore my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may be married to another, to him who was raised from the dead, so that we should bear fruit for God. That is the point. We have died to the law.

Who is it that is under the law of Moses? You can ask yourself this question. Was the law of Moses a system of salvation or was it a system of life for believers? Was anybody ever saved by keeping the law? Scripture tells us it was never a system of salvation, right? Who was under the law? Everybody in the world or believers in the Old Testament age? The law pertained to believers, right? Jonah did not go to Nineveh and say, here are the Ten Commandments, follow these and live. The law was a system of life for believers.

If you were a believer in the Old Testament age from the time of Moses forward, you needed to get with Israel. That is where God's plan was operating for believers and that is why there were so many proselytes to Israel in the Old Testament age. So that is important to keep in mind.

Those facts tend to slip out of our consciousness sometimes and we can start getting confused. The law was the writing down of God's commands for people who were saved. That was its purpose.

So when Paul says in 7.4, you have become dead to the law, who is he talking to? He is talking to believers, people who started out as Old Testament saints and in this transition period have accepted Christ and are now New Testament saints. Many of these people might have started out worshiping in the synagogue and here came the gospel to Rome or to Ephesus or to Corinth or to some other place in the Roman Empire and whether they were Israelites or Greeks or Barbarians or whoever they might be, many of them had already become believers in God and were already in God's plan as Old Testament saints. You can follow this in the book of Acts and see where the apostles would go somewhere and ask someone, what is it that you know about and they would say, well, we know, we go to the synagogue, we believe in the God of Israel or we have the baptism of John, John the Baptist and they were Old Testament saints.

And so what Paul is explaining, because what's the big problem here? What is this letter addressing? People who are believers who don't know what God's plan is for believers. They think that we're still under the old plan, the plan that was in the law. And so Paul is explaining here, you have died to the law.

You believers who have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior and you have been entered into the new and better covenant founded on new and better promises, you have died to the law. That's not the system for you anymore. And why is that? That you may be married to another.

See you were married to one thing, that was Old Testament salvation, but that husband has died, so to speak, so that you may be married to another. You're entered into a new system of authority, a new way of life. To him who was raised from the dead and there's a purpose for that, so that you bear fruit to God.

What is that fruit? You're already saved. It's not evangelism. It's not bringing in the sheaves and getting everybody else in the world evangelized.

This fruit is the fruit of righteousness, the fruit of the Spirit, the thing that God wants us to learn and do as believers in this age. God has a plan and a purpose for us. We are to bear fruit.

And we went over to John 14 and 15 and we saw Jesus talking about that fruit. Abide in me. My words abide in you.

You will bear much fruit. My Father will be pleased and so forth. So that's the idea.

We don't want to lose track of that because we get into Paul's review of the way life was under the law in the last half of chapter 7, but he picks that right back up. After he reviews that, he says in chapter 8, verse 1, after having reviewed and said in the old system, there was no power of the

Spirit. You didn't have the Holy Spirit as a rule.

And everything was the energy of the flesh and God was demonstrating that the flesh can't produce the kind of fruit that God wants. And so in chapter 8, verse 1, he says that is why now there's no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. This is not going to hell condemnation.

This is condemnation meaning you're a dead branch. You're not bearing any fruit. You're not fulfilling the plan of God in terms of divine righteousness.

Because divine righteousness doesn't come by works. It comes by grace, through faith, the Word of God, the ministry of the Spirit in the soul of a believer. And that system wasn't in place in the Old Testament age.

There was a righteousness by faith. Paul said earlier in this book, the law and the prophets bore witness to righteousness by faith. But that wasn't the emphasis and the point of that age.

It is the emphasis and it is the point in this age. That's why there's no condemnation now because what the law could not do, look in verse 3, what the law of Moses could not do because it was weak through the flesh. Obeying the law of Moses was all based on human energy.

You had to try to do it in your own strength. To keep those rules and to observe those feasts and bring those sacrifices and wear those garments and follow those codes and so forth was all a human energy external thing. And God's point was as hard as you try and as much as you observe, that doesn't produce divine righteousness.

The most that does is produce self-righteousness. The law never was a system of righteousness, was it? It was a system of condemnation. It showed us how far we fall short.

That was its purpose. So what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God accomplished by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh. On account of sin, he condemned sin in the flesh so that what, in verse 4, the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.

Now we can ask ourselves this question. What is the righteous requirement of the law? Does the law say believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved? Is that the righteous requirement of the law? Does the righteous requirement of the law say you must have divine righteousness or you're going to the lake of fire? That's not what it says, is it? They had terrible reprobates in the Old Testament age who are still going to be resurrected and live with God for eternity. The righteous requirement of the law was genuine righteousness, divine righteousness, to have a heart after the likeness of God's own heart, to live like man was created in the image of God and after his likeness.

And of course in our own strength we can't do that and that's what the law demonstrated. But now that righteous requirement of the law to live in the image of God to produce divine righteousness

can be fulfilled in us who do what in verse 4? Who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit. There's a new element here that we didn't have before.

Remember the big argument that Paul gave us in chapter 7 when he said, I know that in me nothing good dwells, to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. And I do what I don't want to do and I don't do what I do want to do and so forth. And he says in verse 23 of chapter 7, I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Now if you were going to draw a diagram of this battle that Paul put in chapter 7, who are the two boxers in this fight? Who is it that Paul pictures as fighting in his soul in the last half of chapter 7? Look at verse 23, there is the law of sin and there's the law of my mind, right? My mind wants to serve God but it's overcome by this law in my members, this law of sin that keeps diverting me and keeping me from doing what I want to do. Who will deliver me from this body of death? So the two fighters in that contest are a human being and the law of sin. Your mind wants to do one thing, sin tells you to do something else.

But who are the fighters here in our age, in chapter 8? Now we have the Holy Spirit warring against the flesh, right? Remember we'll see over in Corinthians where it talks about the flesh war against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, that's a different battle, isn't it? The Holy Spirit is on one side now where in the Old Testament age it was human flesh fighting. That's what we have in chapter 7. I believe that's over in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 where Paul talks about the spirit and the flesh. Actually, the end of chapter 2 and the beginning of chapter 3. He says in chapter 2 verse 14, the natural man does not receive the things of the spirit for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.

But he who is spiritual judges all things. He himself is rightly judged by no one who has known the mind of the Lord and so forth. And when we go through our passages on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we'll see that that is now the conflict.

So we've gotten our side reinforced in this age, haven't we? It's not our energy against the power of sin. Now it's God's spirit against the power of sin. So it's a different conflict in this age.

And if God is on one side, if God is for us, who can be against us? So there's no reason for us to lose now and that's the point. There was a good reason for people to lose in the Old Testament age because as a rule, the ministry of the spirit was not there in a universal sense, in a constant sense, you didn't have the indwelling, you didn't have the system of righteousness by faith that we have commanded for us. So that's what he's talking about in chapter 8. And that's why he says there's no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Now once again, we have this very important phrase, in Christ Jesus. Once again, the first thing we want to think of is, well, when I got saved, I was placed into union with Christ. That was one of

the ministries of the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit seals me into Christ, right? And so it would sound like if we're thinking about salvation, there's no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Everyone who's been saved, there's no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Now that again is a true concept, but that's not what Paul is talking about in chapter 8. Keep in mind the context.

We just saw back in chapter 7, he's talking about believers who are no longer under the law. Now they're under grace. You've been married to another, to him that was raised from the dead, so that you should bear fruit to God.

In chapter 7, verse 5, he says, When we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should do what? So that we should serve. Now service is not a requirement for salvation, is it? Service is a command for those who are saved.

We have been delivered from the law, we died to what we were held by, that law of sin and so forth, so that we should serve in newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. And that word letter there, it's the word from which we get grammar, grammatos, it's the written code. So if there's any doubt that we're talking about the law of Moses, we don't have the law of sin written down, do we? The written law is the law of Moses.

That's the one that's been put on the tablets of stone and in the books of Moses. We should serve in the newness of the Spirit, not in the oldness of the letter. Now, what does all of this boil down to for us? Again, we don't typically have a problem with going back under the law, but in our society today, in our culture, especially our Christian culture, we find these things cropping up.

Someone asked me a question just today. They said they knew that there was a church that met in our home here, and they said, well, what does your church do? I know they, obviously, because you meet for Bible study and so forth, but what do you do? Do you have ministries in the community or whatever? Well, what is that? That's a standard of measure. It's a standard of evaluation that Christians use on one another to say, well, is this a good group or a weird group? Is this a healthy, productive, growing Christian group, or is this some sort of a cultish, ingrown, sit, soak, and sour spinoff group? And so what's the measure? Well, what are you doing? Well, what is that? That's the law.

That's deeds. That's measuring by an external standard of righteousness. Are you having an impact in the community? Are you out as a group evangelizing? Are you marching on the abortion clinic? Are you passing out tracts? Are you doing something in the visible world to, quote, unquote, make a difference for Christ or win the world for Christ or whatever? And it's a very subtle thing, isn't it? You don't immediately tie that question to the law of Moses, but that's exactly what it is.

What is the genuine measure of an individual believer or a group? It's righteousness by faith. It's the fruit that God is looking for in the life, and that's not measurable on the outside. It may have effects on the outside.

You may be involved in ministries or evangelism or whatever, but the real measure is Galatians 5, 22, and 23. The fruit of the spirit that God is looking for that means you have a successful, healthy, productive Christian life is joy, peace, patience, gentleness, forbearance, long-suffering. The first and greatest of those is love, and that love may manifest itself in external ministries or formal ministries of some sort.

That love may also manifest itself in a number of other ways. And so to take one narrow criteria of actions or deeds and say, well, this is my yardstick for deciding if a group or an individual is worthy or worthwhile or healthy or whatever, is to go back to the law. It's to say, well, are you keeping the rule? Are you... Some people think that tithing is an extremely vital, essential part of Christian life.

Are you tithing? Are you taking 10% of your income and giving it to God? And of course, in a lot of cases, what that boils down to is, are you taking that 10th and giving it to us? Whoever we may be, and we believe that we're representing God, and so when you give your 10% to us, you're giving it to God. Well, maybe and maybe not. But where does the tithe come from? Is there a single reference to tithing anywhere in the New Testament? There's not.

Is there... There's a whole list of things that aren't mentioned in the New Testament that wind up being used as a standard for righteousness. So this is really important for us to get a grip on because we have to convince ourselves of what God's standard is, and we have to be able to stand when other people use a false standard on us. In other words, we don't want to be using a false standard, and we don't want to allow other people who are using a false standard to mess us up and throw us off track, to make us feel guilty, to make us feel unfruitful or unproductive, because that's not the right measure.

So, as we continue here in chapter 8, what the law could not do because it was weak in the flesh, and there's an awful lot of what passes for righteousness and passes for religion that is done in the energy of the flesh. It isn't guided by the Holy Spirit. It isn't fueled by the Word of God.

The attitudes and the motivations behind what is done can range from working off guilt or trying to impress others or trying to meet that false standard that people are applying. If we said, oh, you know, we don't want to be second-class citizens. We don't want people looking down on us.

Let's have a community ministry of some sort. Let's have a, we've got time, let's have a vacation Bible school this summer so that we can look like a church and people will think that we're being productive and so forth. If that was our motivation, everything that we did in that regard would be energy of the flesh.

We might even have some children come and be saved, but that would be God working through the power of His Word in spite of us and not because of us. So we really have to be careful that we don't end up working in the energy of the flesh. And it begins with recognizing that before we can do a work for God, quote unquote, God has to do a work in us.

And anything that happens in the visible world and in the material circumstances of life will be a result of what God has done on the inside. And we don't start saying that what we do is going to be a means of God bringing us to maturity. But if we hold that view and if we live by that view, which is the scriptural view, it's God's view, we will be swimming against the tide, swimming upstream in Christianity today.

Because wherever you look, the books that you read, the articles that you see in Christian literature, the Christian radio programs, the Christians that you come in contact with and rub elbows with that are in traditional mainstream conservative evangelical churches are judging themselves and judging you and me by what we do, what we're involved in. Did we show up? Were we there for whatever they consider to be the Lord's work? And it takes many times a conscious application of the Word of God to remember that you are not what you do, you are what you think. And that's God's criteria.

And that's why Jesus said, many are going to come in that day and say, Lord, Lord, here's everything we did. And he's going to say, I never knew you. So that's what Paul is talking about here, the righteous requirement of the law, which is to please God.

That's the bottom line, isn't it? Don't we want to please God in our lives? God is not pleased by us getting out and being all flying elbows and knees. God is pleased when God is able to do his work in us. And once he's done a work in us, he can also do work through us.

But we have to be patient. We have to be willing to put up with some scorn perhaps or some low opinions on the part of other believers. We have to be willing to be a fool for Christ, if you will, to be misunderstood by people who don't understand the plan of God.

And in many cases, it's a conscious decision. Do we want to conform and just go along and not make a wave? Or do we want to stand on what we know to be the true word of God, the true plan of God in this age? That's the decision that we make each and every day, every time we decide where we're going to assemble, every time we decide how we are going to pursue pleasing God. And it also takes a great measure of humility because we have to recognize that in many cases, we are not ready to go out and change the world for God.

We are still in need of being changed by God. And you look at many of the great biblical characters that God spent years and years preparing. You think of David out with the sheep or Joseph in prison or Moses out in the wilderness for 40 years and in Egypt for 40 years.

So there was a total of 80 years of preparation before he ever picked up the staff and led Israel

out of Egypt. And Elijah by the brook and on and on and on. Jacob serving under Laban and so forth.

There are years of preparation where God teaches us things and molds us and shapes us before we are necessarily ready to make some sort of impact in the world. And we may never make a visible impact. We may never win dozens of souls to Christ.

We may never have a ministry to the homeless or the urban orphans or whatever it may be. But our calling to which we are called is individual and it always starts with God's work in us. And this is what Paul continues talking about in verse 5 of chapter 8. He says, So there's a distinction, isn't there? And we immediately think, well, the things of the flesh, that's got to be sin and evil and all kinds of dark, bad stuff.

But it can also be things in the material world, things that are visible, things that are external. Isn't that what he just talked about back in chapter 7? That the law operates in the energy of the flesh? Well, the law has a lot of good provisions. Take care of the orphans.

Leave the corners of your field unreaped so that the dispossessed and the less fortunate can come and gather grain and feed themselves. By the way, isn't it interesting that God didn't tell Israel, bake loaves of bread and go about and distribute them to the poor. He didn't say that, did he? He said, leave your field, leave the corners of your field to where someone can come and do their own work and cut the grain and take it and grind it and make flour and take that flour and make their own bread.

There's a work ethic even in the charity that God administered in Israel, isn't there? There was no bread line in Israel. There was the opportunity to go and harvest your own grain. And that's something we can keep in mind as we watch welfare reform and so forth in this country.

And we try to find the line between a godly charity and a liberal form of handout that actually hurts people more than helps them. We have great examples in the Old Testament. Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh.

These are things in the world. Did I have an impact? Did I have an effect? Does someone appreciate me? So much of ministry today is based on people feeling like they made a difference in someone else's life. Our criteria needs to be, did we make a difference in God's eyes? Is God pleased with what we did? A Sigmund Freud or some other psychiatrist or psychologist can make a difference in someone's life.

A philosopher can make a difference in someone's life. Hegel or Voltaire or Ralph Waldo Emerson or somebody like that can make a difference in someone's life. That's not the measure.

The people who offer diet plans and this young guy that you always see late at night and he's got this program for success and all these powerful Hollywood people and sports stars and

everybody else have used his tapes. They listen to his tapes on a daily basis. He's made a difference in their life.

The fellow that won the U.S. Open last year says it's all because of so-and-so's tapes. Power of positive thinking. That's not it, but it's something like that.

And getting rid of your bad thoughts and thinking good thoughts, having a plan, being organized and so forth. And this guy's really, the fellow that promotes this, is handsome and has a nice big smile and is a very eloquent speaker and is a persuasive, charismatic individual. And he's made a difference in hundreds of thousands of people's lives and they will testify to it on TV.

What does God think about all that? I suspect very little. It isn't a part of God's plan. It doesn't accomplish God's purpose.

It doesn't demonstrate and reflect God's grace and God's glory. So it's meaningless. So what if you won the U.S. Open? So what if you became financially secure? So what if you cured your phobias and became well-adjusted and socially acceptable and so forth? What difference does it make when you stand before the judgment seat of Christ? Making an impact in people's life is not the criteria of spiritual life and spiritual growth.

Love, joy, peace, patience. Galatians 5, 22 and 23. That's God's standard and that's often invisible and unnoticed by the world at large.

People close to us can see it and people who are also on that narrow road into that narrow gate that leads to life will see it and appreciate it. And there is a great bond of fellowship among believers who have that as their goal but don't expect a lot of company and don't expect appreciation and understanding and great crowds and stadiums full of people cheering and so forth. It just isn't going to happen.

Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. Now, we say, this is great. That all sounds good.

I want to do that. I want to be acceptable in the day of judgment. I want to be fully pleasing to the Lord.

I would love to have that well-done, now good and faithful servant said about me when I see the Lord. So I want to set my mind on the things of the Spirit. Well, how do we do that? How would one go about setting his mind on the things of the Spirit? Well, we could assume that the Spirit is otherworldly and we could sit and meditate and become deeply mystical.

We could do like some programs in churches have suggested and sit and visualize ourselves walking through a sunlit field full of morning glories hand in hand with Jesus Christ and fill ourselves with a great sense of tranquility and peace by visualizing this scene in our minds and

say, well, we're setting our minds on the things of the Spirit. I'm visualizing myself with Jesus Christ and I'm casting aside my cares and just imagining myself with Jesus. What is the problem with that? And you'd be surprised this visualization and meditation is really going strong in a lot of segments of Christianity today.

What's the matter with that? Dave Hunt, I don't know if you've heard of him, but he makes a really good point about this. If you look around in the congregation, if you could see inside the minds of each of these people who's visualizing themselves in the field of morning glories walking hand in hand with Jesus Christ, do you think that it's going to be the same Jesus Christ in each mind? It isn't, is it? Some are going to visualize in one way and some another. And what's the basis of that picture of Christ? Who knows what it is? It may be that he's a good man or he's a wonderful, kind, loving brother or he's just a kindly rabbi sort of figure.

A lot of people visualize him as sort of a buddy and he's just like the best friend you ever had and so forth. And none of these things draw from the truth of Scripture and what God says about Jesus Christ and what the Scriptures say about Jesus Christ. If we want to set our mind on the things of the Spirit, we have to set our mind on the truth of God.

The greatest passage for this is what Jesus Christ himself said back in John chapter 6. You might turn with me over to John 6. One of our members in absentia, Paul Stanton and I just had a conversation over the email here last week about this passage. And Paul made some really good points about this also. But look in John chapter 6 verse 53.

Jesus is talking to the Jews and he just got through talking about the living bread that comes down from heaven. In verse 51 he says, if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.

The Jews quarreled among themselves saying, how can this man give us his flesh to eat? Now, right away, do we see a distinction between someone who has their mind on the things of the Spirit and people where they literally have their minds on the things of the flesh, don't they? When Jesus says, I am the bread from heaven and you've got to partake of this bread, they're thinking, are we going to be cannibals? We're going to take a bite out of his arm or his leg here. They have their mind completely in the earthly realm. So in verse 53, Jesus says, most assuredly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.

And this gets back to what we just saw in Romans chapter eight, verse one. There is no condemnation to those who are what? In Christ Jesus. So if we want to be in Christ Jesus, if we want to be setting our minds on the things of the Spirit, we need to do what Jesus says here,

which is initially a little bit shocking.

We need to eat his flesh and drink his blood. This is how we are in Christ. This is how we set our minds on the things of the Spirit.

Well, fortunately, the Lord explains this. A good memory aid if you want to think about this is remember John 6, 53 and also remember verse 63. Verse 53 and verse 63 of John 6, just lay them side by side and it makes great sense.

Look over at verse 63. It is the Spirit who gives life. Jesus said, you eat his flesh and drink his blood and you have life in you.

That's how it comes. He explains that in 63. It is the Spirit who gives life.

The flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life. How do we partake of the flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ? How do we live life the way that he lived life is another way of putting it.

Jesus Christ lived a life of flesh and blood here on earth, but he did it in the power of the Spirit and he lived by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. So if we want to be in Christ, not in the positional sense of salvation, but in the experiential sense that's talked about in Romans chapter 8, so that there's no condemnation, God is not displeased with us as believers. If we want to be in Christ and we want to set our minds on the things of the Spirit, this is how we do it.

The words that Jesus Christ speaks are spirit and life. That's the means. That's why we place such an emphasis on learning the Word of God.

It's not always easy to come here on a Friday night or on a Sunday morning. It's not always easy to, after a long week or a long weekend, to focus and concentrate on the Word of God, but it's the most important thing that we do. That is life.

It's our bread. It's our life. Without it, we cannot accomplish God's purpose for us in this age.

It's the provision of God. It's the manna from heaven. It is the flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

And there's nothing more important for us as believers, whether it be here or on the radio or in a book or at another church or another Bible study, wherever it may be, there are wonderful sources of great teaching of the Word of God in many different media. The important thing isn't where or how. It's that we are consistent in making sure that we partake of the flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ through His Word.

That is the means and that is the key. And it's one of the most under-emphasized and

misunderstood aspects of the Christian life today. The more you afflict your righteous soul by listening to Christian media, the more discouraging it is in this particular area because there's a lot of talk about work.

There's a lot of talk about ministry. There's a lot of talk about how you feel and how gratified you are and whether you're satisfied with life or not. But there's very little emphasis placed on how believers please God.

But this is how. This is the subject of Romans chapter 8. And it's critically important as we go through this chapter to understand that when Paul talks about all things working together for good and God foreordaining things and setting things up in His plan, this isn't for our pleasure and our benefit. It's for God's pleasure.

It's for God's purpose. It's for God's glory that these things are done. We like to think, well, all things work together for good.

That means that I'm going to have plenty of finances. I'm going to have plenty of comfortable circumstances. I'm going to have plenty of happiness, plenty of blessings.

All things are going to work together for my good. But it doesn't say our good. It's all things work together for the good, the good purpose that God is accomplishing.

John the Baptist got his head cut off. The apostle Paul got his head cut off. Jesus Christ was crucified.

And that was all things working together for good. Wasn't necessarily what an outsider might look at as their good, but it's all a matter of perspective. And that's what Paul is talking about.

How do we please God? How do we accomplish God's purpose? We've, first of all, got to start by thinking about the Word of God and the plan of God. And it doesn't revolve around us. We are not at the center of the universe.

A friend of mine and I often kid each other about being at the center of the universe and that because we occupy that position, we can make certain requests and have certain privileges and certain pleasures in life because we are at the center of the universe. But of course we're not. God is at the center of the universe.

The astronomers haven't figured that out yet, but if they ever find the center of the universe, God is there. And everything revolves around Him and His pleasure and His purpose. And we will find at the point that we abandon ourselves to His idea of what is good, we reap tremendous personal blessing, personal reward and personal benefit as a result.

But that's what Jesus was talking about when He said, it's at the point that you lose your life that you find it. But if you seek your own life, you will lose it. And so this passage here in John chapter

6, if you just remember John 6, 53 and 63, that's the key.

That's how we are in Christ. Notice again what He says in verse 56 there. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.

We just reviewed over there in John 15 when He says, abide in me and you will bear much fruit. How do we abide in Him? It's not, we don't just scrunch up and try real hard and yield or meditate on empty space or something. It's through the Word.

And that's what 63 tells us. It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh profits nothing.

The words that I speak to you are Spirit and they are life. But in verse 64, He says, there are some of you who do not trust. There are some of you who do not believe.

There are some of you to whom these words that I speak are not a reality. You don't accept them as fact. They aren't a part of the construct in your soul upon which you base priorities and make decisions.

And that is how we end up being a dead branch. That is how we set our minds on the things of the flesh instead of the things of the Spirit. So that's a key parallel passage here.

There's another great one over in Galatians. And we've seen when we studied Galatians, the close parallel. These two letters to Romans and Galatians were written very nearly at the same time.

And the themes and the ideas that are on Paul's mind are the same. But look in Galatians chapter 4. And he says in verse 19, My little children for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you. Until Christ is formed in you.

This is one of the places where a little bit of exposure to Greek really helps. One of the things we discover in Greek, and this may be an esoteric point, and if it is, just bear with me. But when we talk about being in something, we think about being in a container, don't we? I'm in the house.

The coffee is in the can. And it gets confusing. If I said the coffee is in the can and the can is in the coffee, that confuses us because they're mutually exclusive.

One can be inside the other, but they can't both be inside each other. But Jesus has got through saying in John chapter 6 and in John chapter 15, Abide in me and I in you. I will be in you and you will be in me.

And we get this container idea of one thing being inside another. We say, well, that doesn't really make good sense in my mind. But in Greek, they had different spatial orientations than we do.

They weren't engineers. They weren't an industrial society. They were philosophers.

They thought in different kinds of terms. And when they said something is in something else, one of the ways they would say this is the dative, the locative, or the instrumental case of a noun. You can put a noun in a certain form and we classify it as dative slash locative slash instrumental.

It's the very same form. In English, we translate this as in, by, or with. And anytime you run across a word and a lot of times we just translate it in.

If any man be in Christ and it might be in this dative, locative, instrumental form. Well, you have to make a decision. Is it in, is it by, or is it with? Because in the Greek mind, it might be any one or all of those put together.

So what you might think of is rather than when it says if Christ is in you or you are in Christ, rather than thinking of contents inside a can, think of mixing two things together. If you're making a cake and you mix flour and you mix salt and you mix baking soda or baking powder, I guess it is. You wouldn't put baking soda in there, would you? You've got baking powder in the flour and you've got flour in the baking powder, right? It's depending on which one you're emphasizing, each one is in the other.

It's a blending. It is a union. It is an identification.

The two things are linked in a special way. And that's what it means to be in Christ. It doesn't mean that we have been physically picked up and placed inside the container called Christ.

We have been unified with Him, united with Him. And that's why so often it says we are in Him and He is in us. It's the same thing looked at from two different perspectives.

We have been intermingled. We have been united with Him. We've been united with Him in a death like His, Paul has just told us here in Romans.

And we will be united with Him in a resurrection like His. So when we see this phrase in 8.1 and it says there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ, we're not talking about the positional union at salvation. We're talking about union with Christ, partaking of His flesh and His blood, living the way that He lived, setting our minds on the things of the Spirit, being in Christ and Christ being in us.

And that's why Christ says that He will be in us, not at the point of salvation, but at the point that we have His words and keep them. We saw that in John 15. You see it in John 6. We just saw it.

His words are spirit and they are life. And when we partake of those, He is in us and so forth. In John 15, He says, if you have my words and keep them, I and my Father will come and abide in you.

We will come and make our home in you. We will be intermingled. We will be united with you.

And that's something that goes beyond what takes place at salvation. It takes place when we set our minds on the things of the Spirit, when we set our minds on the truth of the Word of God. And that's our reality.

That's our priority. That is the key to the Christian life. The power of God comes into the life of the believer through the Word of God and the Spirit of God.