

96-07-19a

As we prepare to resume our study in Romans this evening, let's take a moment, as we always do, to stop and be sure that we are in a position to take maximum advantage of the study of God's Word, to seek the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, to consciously lay aside the weights and distractions of the day and of the week, and to pursue fully and with our best level of concentration the study of God's Word. Shall we pray? Father, we thank You again for the privilege that we have of studying Your Word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will enlighten us, will bring these things to our mind, and will use the truth of Your Word as a sharp sword to divide us asunder, to rebuke, correct, and instruct us in righteousness, and to thoroughly equip us for every good work.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. We pick up tonight in Romans chapter 8. We are at the central portion of this letter where Paul is making the point that he has spent several chapters laying a foundation to make.

He has, through the Course, reduced the position of his opponents to rebel. Those opponents who say that righteousness comes by works, that righteousness comes by the observance of a set of rules or a set of expectations that people develop. In many ways, the Law of Moses had been added to, and accretions and additions and expansions had so engulfed the Law of Moses by this time, when Paul was writing, that the actual observance, in some ways, bore very little resemblance to what God had entrusted to Moses there on the mountain.

And the standard by which people judged one another was not unlike what we have today. We have a standard, we have a Christian culture, we have a Christian way of life that is promoted, and we have several different flavors of that depending on which strand of Christianity you're in. But in whatever association we find ourselves with other believers, we have to ask ourselves this question.

Whose evaluation am I seeking to meet? By what standard am I judging others? And that's a question we can ask ourselves every day. What do I consider to be a successful day? When I get to the end of the day and I review, or if we're really on top of things, we can think about it during the day while there's still time to repair the damage, and think, what is my motivation? What am I seeking? What is driving me to do the things I do? Do I have an ambition to succeed in a particular area? Am I grinding through with a sense of duty because this is what I have done in the past, what I will do today and what I'm supposed to do tomorrow? Is it the opinions of others that drives us? Is that why we dress the way we do, why we speak and act the way we do, why we accomplish the tasks that we choose and perform? What is it that motivates us to get through the day? Somewhere we have to answer a question for ourselves, and that is, as a believer, what does God expect from me? And as I do the mundane things that this life calls for, why am I doing them the way I do? How am I accomplishing them? What is going on in my mind and in my soul? Because that's the only thing that counts. The accomplishment of the task in the great sweep of

history is relatively meaningless.

You can think about people that lived a hundred years ago. I always get reflective when I go back and print pictures of my ancestors as I've been doing this past week. And I look at these long dead faces of people that lived back in the 1800s, and who knows what their standard of living was or what kind of wallpaper they had.

In some of their cases, we don't know their occupation or their location. They're just a face with a name, and that's great-great-grandpa Schofield, or that's great-great-grandpa somebody else. And what was the sum and the total of that individual's life, other than producing offspring that eventually enabled me to come into the world in this particular family? What is the impact of their life? And we say, well, there are some people that have made an impact in history.

There are some people that have accomplished something useful to humanity. But nowhere in Scripture does God say that that is going to be the standard by which He will judge us at the judgment seat of Christ. It's going to be one criteria, and that is, did we bear fruit? The judgment seat of Christ is a fruit evaluation time, and we are given quite a bit of information about the expectation.

This is a principle that we all learn. It's practiced in every different area of life where there is organization and structure and authority. If you are assigned a task, if you take on a job, in some cases some of us have worked for ourselves and we have to set goals for ourselves, but there is an expectation.

There's a certain reason why people are paying you to do what you do. There's a level of performance, and it's important that we understand what that is up front. When you take a position, when you assume a duty, you know that there is going to be evaluation, either formal or informal.

Well, what is the expectation? What am I supposed to do so that I will be satisfactory, so that this will continue and whoever is paying me or hiring me will be happy? And then whatever that standard is, we have to keep reminding ourselves as we go through the months and the years, am I meeting that standard? Am I doing what I was called to do? And this is true in the spiritual realm as well. So what Paul is doing in Romans is giving us additional information. We find it in Colossians and in Galatians and in every book of the New Testament.

But most clearly in some of these epistles, this is God's expectation of us. Paul has identified the false standards, the wrong-headed way of living, the way that seems right to a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death. And now he is talking about the positive side.

He says a lot of these external standards fall in the same category as the law of Moses. It doesn't have the ability to create righteousness in us. It doesn't have the power to transform us.

It was never designed to be a standard of righteousness. The set of rules that apply to behavior are designed to demonstrate that we're corrupt, that we need God's power within us. That point has been made, and so in this age especially, we have the opportunity to bear this fruit.

So now Paul in chapter 8 is talking about the new life in Christ, the new age, the new set of opportunities that we have as believers in Jesus Christ in the church age. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh on account of sin.

He condemned sin in the flesh so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. And that last phrase in verse 4 is the theme of this section of Romans. What does it mean to walk according to the flesh? What does it mean to walk according to the Spirit? What does it mean to be in the flesh? And he expands that in the next several verses.

Those who live according to the flesh, what are they like? What are we like if we're failing the grace of God? If we're failing the purpose and the plan of God for us right now? How could we know if we're failing in that area? Well, if we set our minds on the things of the flesh. What are the things of the flesh? Well, there is a multitude of Scripture passages that talk about that. Let me just quickly read you a few and you can just get the flavor for these if you want to note the references down, that's fine.

I'll give you these verses and give you the reference. The flattery of the tongue of a strange woman, lust not after her beauty in your heart, neither let her take thee with her eyelids. That's Proverbs 6, 24 and 25.

The lust of the eye. Becoming infatuated with the ideas of romance and either fantasizing or actually carrying out relationships with people that are not legitimate and not a part of God's plan. So much of this starts out in the mind and winds up acting itself out in real life.

If you look at a woman to lust after her, you have committed adultery with her already in your heart. Matthew 5, 28. Just the way we look.

Now, if we were strictly under the law, it would only matter if you fulfilled this desire, if you went out and had an illicit relationship. But in this age, it's enough that it goes on in your mind. It's enough that if you look and fantasize or if you imagine or if you let your mind dwell on something that's outside the bounds of what God has designed for us, that is death.

That is the flesh setting the mind on the things of the flesh. Now, that's an easy one to think of. What about this in Mark 4, 19? The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for other things entering in and choking the Word of God so that it becomes unfruitful.

Remember Jesus talking in the parable of the sower and the seeds and the soil. The cares of this world. If our minds are constantly going over concerns in this life, constantly gnawing on things like a dog with a bone, well, what about my financial status? What about this relationship with this family member? What about this circumstance? Or what about this physical suffering that I've got or whatever? If our mind is occupied with a circumstance or a person or a situation in this life, that is a care of this world.

And if our mind is occupied with a care of this world, that chokes the Word of God and we become unfruitful. And that's a part of setting the mind on the things of the flesh. Paul says these things, talking about the Israelites in the Old Testament, were our examples to the intent that we should not desire evil things as they also desired.

Neither be idolaters as were some of them as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. 1 Corinthians 10, 6 and 7. Those who are rich fall into temptations and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful desires which drowned men in destruction and perdition. 1 Timothy 6, 9. Being concerned with finances.

Being concerned with material things. What about my car? What about my house? What about the contents of my house? Clothing, whatever it may be. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, 3 and 4, the time will come when they, meaning us, we believers, will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own desires will heap to themselves teachers having itching ears and they will turn away their ears from the truth and will be turned to fables.

The Word of God teaches us in Titus 2, 12 that denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. What is this present world like? You've got things happening. We see the justice system crumbling.

We see disasters, whether it's natural disasters or plane crashes or whatever it may be. We are surrounded by things that can occupy our minds and cause concern. We want to talk about it with others.

We think about it. We speculate on how that might affect our life and so on. And we need to be in the world but not of the world.

And if we allow our minds to run on these things at length and distract us from the Word of God, we fall into this category. Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. When lust is conceived, it brings forth sin.

Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. James 1. Verses 14 and 15. Here's one that is difficult for us, talking about the things of the flesh.

Where do wars and fightings among you come from? Do they not come from the desires that war in your members? Remember here in Romans when Paul has said, yield your members as

instruments of righteousness? It's the very same word. The wars and fightings, the dissensions and disputes and antagonisms and conflicts between believers come from the desires of our flesh. We have a desire to be vindicated.

We have a desire to be perceived as right. We have a desire to be well thought of or to be justified in our opinion or in the action that we've taken or the stand that we have taken. And if we perceive that others don't have the opinion of us or our actions that we think they should have, that causes us to get into conflict.

And we conflict. We have wars. You desire and you have not.

You kill and desire to have and you cannot obtain. You fight and war yet you have not because you ask not. You ask and receive not because you ask amiss so that you may consume it upon your desires.

That's James 4, 1-3. All of these things are descriptions of operating in the flesh, setting our minds on the things of the flesh. And we have to sometimes distinguish between the obvious and the not so obvious manifestations of this.

It's easy to see that some TV preacher has fallen in a morality area and he obviously was in the flesh and had his mind on the things of the flesh. But we have to turn the laser beam searchlight of our perception on ourselves and say are there areas where I am focused on something other than who I am and why I'm here in God's plan. And that is living in the flesh.

That's what Paul is talking about. He says in Romans 8, 5, 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 mind on the things of the Spirit.

So the great question arises, well, what are the things of the Spirit? And in brief, we see that this is a synonym for being in Christ. We saw in John 6 last time that it is the Spirit that gives life, the words that Jesus speaks are life and are Spirit. In Ephesians we find that the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit.

It's what the Spirit uses to transform us. It's what He uses to guide us. It's what He uses to rebuke and correct and instruct us.

The things of the Spirit are in the Word of God. Can you think of something that would be a thing of the Spirit that you could get from some other source? Would we expect the Holy Spirit to guide us in an area of science, to discern something about God? Would we expect the Holy Spirit to speak to us with a voice other than that of the Word of God? There are some people who believe that this happens. The difficulty is if you hear a voice whispering in your ear and teaching you a principle or a quote-unquote truth, how would you check to know if that was from God or from Satan who masquerades as an angel of light? Where would you go to test it? We would have to

go to the Word of God, wouldn't we? And ultimately the Word of God is the one sure communication from God by which everything else is measured.

And in this part of the church age it is the complete communication of God to us. However, we are incapable of digesting it and processing it and making sense of it and operating in the power of it without the ministry of God, the Holy Spirit, and that is His function. And we reviewed that last time in John chapter 15 and chapter 16.

Jesus said He would send the Comforter who would lead us into all truth, who would bring to mind the things that He had taught. He anointed the disciples with the Holy Spirit so that they could communicate the truth that Jesus had taught them to others. And in the context of the Great Commission and in the context of Acts chapter 1, we see that the commissioning and the sending forth of the disciples and their initial ministry in the church age was all superintended and empowered by God the Holy Spirit.

So these are the things of the Spirit. To be carnally minded, to have a mind on the flesh, is death. Now, if this were literally true, if physical death resulted from being carnally minded, how many believers do you think would be alive on the planet? I know I wouldn't be here.

So we know right away that when it says to have your mind on the things of the flesh is death, we're not talking about physical death, are we? We know that it's possible for us to spend hours, days, weeks, months, even years, even a lifetime out of the will of God, out of the things of the Spirit, and with our mind on the things of the flesh. We as believers can be carnally minded. So what kind of death is that? It's the kind of death that Jesus spoke about over in John.

We have, I think, reviewed that enough that I'll just mention it briefly. But in John chapter 15, I am the vine, you are the branches. Abide in Me and you will bear much fruit.

Every branch in Me, John 15, 2, that does not bear fruit, He takes away. Not bearing fruit is death. You're a worthless branch.

He says in verse 6 of John 15, If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered. And they gather them and throw them into the fire and they are burned. This is not no salvation.

This is not loss of salvation. This is the fruit of the life. This is the judgment seat of Christ where wood, hay and stubble are burned.

There's been no production of a divine nature. And this is what we have here in Romans 8, 6. To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. And that is the consequence of life in time.

Notice that life and peace are something that we can enjoy now. We can enjoy the life that partakes of the eternal now. And why is that? Because the fleshly mind, the carnal mind, is

enmity against God.

It is opposition to God. It's not subject to the law of God and cannot be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. You might say, if the Spirit of God dwells in you indeed. If you have the full ministry of the Holy Spirit and are taking advantage of it rather than simply having the seal of the Holy Spirit, which protects you from perdition as a non-productive believer.

He goes on to say, if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his. But if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. Now, as in several other places in Romans, we're tempted here to think, well, this sure sounds to me like salvation.

It's salvation. You're placed in Christ and this must be talking about just salvation. He's digressed from talking about the Christian life.

Let's review for a moment our passages that talk about being in Christ because it's one of those areas that is often confused. It is true that at the point of salvation, the baptism of the Holy Spirit enters us into union with Jesus Christ and that is something that never changes. However, there is an operational status of being in Christ or not being in Christ as a believer and that's what Paul is talking about here.

There's been no transition to go back and talk about salvation. Paul, throughout this book, as we have demonstrated time and time again, is talking to believers about how to live the Christian life and the reason he is exhorting people in this chapter is that they are already believers and they need to walk in Christ. They need to walk in the Spirit.

They need to not succumb to the arguments and the pressure of those who want them to live by an external standard. You might just look at verse 12. Who is he talking to? What's the second word in that verse? Therefore, brethren.

Brethren is a technical term for believers. We don't call unbelievers brethren, do we? This is not an evangelistic pitch. He's talking about life in Christ.

But let's review some of the other passages more clearly. Some of these we have looked at before. But for example, Jesus Christ talking about the disciples in John chapter 17, verse 25.

John 17 is this great prayer to God the Father. He says, O righteous Father, the world has not known You, but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me, i.e., these disciples that are with Him are believers. And I have declared unto them Your name, and I will declare it, so that the love that You have loved Me with will be in them, and I will be in them.

Jesus says, I'm going to continue to declare the name, the reputation, the character of God the Father to the disciples for two reasons. So that the love of God will be in them, and so that Jesus Christ Himself will be in them. That's John 17, verse 25.

The declaration of the Word of God, communicating the truth of God, enables the love of God to be in believers, and enables Christ Himself to be in believers. That is the way that Christ indwells us in the full sense. That's why Paul can say here in Romans 8, 10, If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.

And he says if, because some believers that is true, and other believers it's not. If Christ is dwelling in you, if Christ is at home in your heart. 2 Corinthians 13, 5. Paul says, Examine yourselves to see if you are in the faith.

Prove your own selves. Do you not know your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are reprobates? He's talking to believers, and he says you need to examine yourself. You need to see if you're walking in the faith.

Prove yourself. Do you not know that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are reprobates? And he goes on to say, I trust that you shall know that we are not reprobates. And of course there was no question of Paul's salvation, but some people had questioned whether he might be a reprobate, that he was teaching false doctrine.

Galatians 2, 20. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me.

And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God. This is an option that believers exercise.

After salvation, do we frustrate the grace of God or not? Paul says, I do not frustrate the grace of God. If righteousness came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. Christ wasted his time dying on the cross if righteousness comes by the law.

Colossians 1, 26-29. Paul talks about the gospel that he preaches. He says, Even the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

That's the mystery that was hidden in ages past. There was no such thing as Christ in you under the law of Moses. And Paul says in Colossians 1, 28 there that he preaches Christ.

He says, This is Christ whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Every man mature and complete in Christ Jesus. He warns and teaches so that he can present us complete and mature in Christ.

Colossians 2, 6-10. As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith as you have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the basic things of the world, and not after Christ.

1 John 2, 24. And of course, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John are all addressed to the church. They're all addressed to believers.

John says, Let that therefore abide in you which you have heard from the beginning. What is the beginning? That's the point of salvation. That's the point of faith in Christ and entering into God's plan.

Let that abide in you which you have heard from the beginning. If that which you have heard from the beginning remains in you, you shall continue in the Son and in the Father. Now what's the flip side of that coin? As believers, if we don't continue in what we heard from the beginning, which is the Word of God, the teaching that comes through preaching and teaching in the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, if that does not remain in us, we won't continue in the Father and in the Son.

We saw last time that passage back in John where Jesus said, If any man has my words and keeps my commands, my Father and I will come and make our home with him. That was John 14, 18 through 21. John 14, 21 says, He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me.

And he that loves me shall be loved of my Father. I will love him and will manifest myself to him. That whole context of John 14 through 16 is great for seeing the relationship between faith and obedience and the presence of Jesus Christ in the life of the believer.

And once again, we reviewed last time about the complementary nature of the phrase being in Christ or Christ being in us. That it's like mixing together two things. Do you have baking powder in the flour? Do you have flour in the baking powder? Each of them is in the other.

And that's the nature of our relationship with Christ. We are not contained inside Christ. Christ is not contained inside us.

We are blended. We are unified with Him. And He is blended and unified with us.

What is the fruit of that union in our life? It depends on whether we operate in faith. It depends on whether the ministry of the Holy Spirit is active. It depends on whether we have our mind on the things of the flesh or our mind on the things of the Spirit.

Our study of the Word of God is a key component of that relationship because it's the Word of God that the Holy Spirit uses to speak to us, to guide us and to transform us. So that's what He's talking about here when He says, if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin. And a lot of us as believers, the body is not dead.

The body is alive and well. The flesh and the power of the flesh and the desires of the flesh run rampant with us. And we get very frustrated.

We feel like Paul back in chapter 7 of Romans. And there's no reason for that. That's the way things were before Christ came.

But now that Christ has come, it is terrible for us to wind up living the way people had to live under the law. We've been delivered from that and yet sometimes we don't even know it and we don't take advantage of it. If Christ is in you, verse 10 of Romans 8, the body is dead because of sin.

The Spirit is life because of righteousness. Sometimes you hear people ask, sometimes we ask this question ourselves. Why is it that I keep getting defeated in this area of sin, in this area of failure? What's the matter with me that I keep failing? I've got a besetting sin and no matter how hard I try it keeps coming up and overtaking me.

Where is this power that the Bible speaks of? Where is this victory that Christ achieved over sin on the cross in my life? If we have a besetting sin and if we have an area where we repeatedly fail, this passage is great to help us because this is telling us that we need to examine our thought life. We need to examine and see, is there an area of my thinking where I haven't gotten my mind off of the things of the flesh? Is there a place in my thought life where I haven't disciplined myself to think about those things that are true and noble and right and lovely and of good report and to think on these things so that we have the peace of God? We make a choice sometimes about what we choose to let our mind run on. There are some things that are stimulating.

There are some things that give us a perverse sort of pleasure. It boils down to deciding what's most important to us. Do we want that stimulation? Do we want that gratification that comes from feeling sorry for ourselves or that comes from letting our mind run on something that we consider to be desirable, that isn't a part of the plan of God? Sometimes we enjoy worrying.

Sometimes we enjoy feeling like we got the short end of the stick. And there's a funny thing about human nature that if we feel like we didn't get what was due us, we almost take pleasure in feeling sorry for ourselves and letting other people know that we didn't get what was coming to us or we were somehow deprived or denied something. There is a natural tendency to want the sympathy or the pity or the people shaking their heads and saying, boy, you really did have it rough.

That really is awful that you had to go through that or that you're in that situation or whatever. And we sort of feel vindicated like, well, yes, people ought to sympathize with me and people ought to feel sorry for me and people ought to realize that I've had a tougher road to hoe than others and so on. And we can take a perverse sort of pleasure in that.

We have to decide what's more important, enjoying that momentary rather hollow thrill or finding a way to persevere in a divine viewpoint, in God's viewpoint, in that situation. And it's a choice that we make. And sometimes we have to draw ourselves up short because we don't even realize that that's what we're doing.

But that's the difference between setting our mind on the things of the Spirit or setting our mind on the things of the flesh. What does it profit us to gain someone's sympathy? What does it profit us to have someone shake their head and say, oh, you poor thing, you certainly have had a rough go. What does that get us in the eternal scheme of things? Nothing.

It accomplishes nothing. God isn't going to say, oh, you poor thing, you really had a rough go. God is looking for the fruit of the Spirit.

God has given us that situation and given us that opportunity to produce patience and peace and endurance and those things that only He can create. And when we become a field in which that crop that God wants to grow comes up and bears fruit, that has eternal significance. It's going to make a difference from now on.

It makes a difference in this life and in the next. And we will find that the happiness and the peace that God grants us in this life far surpasses any momentary gratification we may get from whatever it is we have set our mind on. The Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you and He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

And this is a life and a vitality that pertains now. It talks about our resurrection. It talks about our going into the eternal future and a resurrection body like Christ has.

But it talks about the Spirit that dwells in us giving us life now. We can start to live in the eternal realms as human beings in fleshly bodies now through the Spirit that dwells within us. And this is why Paul says in Romans 8.12 Therefore, brethren... He's talking to believers.

This is the Christian life he's emphasizing. We owe a debt. We owe.

I think sometimes I think about this in presenting the Word of God and not talking about present company at all. But you find over the years and so forth and looking around and I have been on the receiving end of teaching and I find that my enthusiasm and my motivation is a little low and I don't really... I hear the truth of God or I read the Bible or read a book or hear a lesson that's perfectly good and reflects truth, but I don't really find myself motivated. I say, well, that's fine, but I've got kind of a good middle of the road thing going here and I don't really find myself strongly motivated to go hard charging into the fray of the divine conflict here and so forth.

I've got my life to live. I've got all these other things going on and so I feel like I'm in balance and that's fine, but I just don't have a fire in my boiler to meditate on these things and take them to

heart and just go... Some people run marathons. I'm just a three miler.

I run the three miles. I've done my distance and that's fine. I don't have the motivation to go run the 26.3 miles.

Well, when Paul says we are debtors, he's introducing another source of motivation. If it isn't enough for us that there is a greater peace and that there's a greater happiness and that there's an eternal impact that our life can have, Paul reminds us here in Romans 8.12 that it's not just a matter of needing some positive lure or a carrot on a stick to motivate us. He reminds us that we owe something.

Jesus Christ came and died for us and since God has done a tremendous amount for us in grace, we are bought with a very dear price. We have been purchased by the Lord God at a very high price and we are not our own. And therefore, it is mandatory.

We owe a debt to glorify God in our body. That's what Scripture teaches. And that's what Paul says here.

We are debtors, not to the flesh to live according to the flesh. We don't owe anybody here anything. The people that look at us and evaluate us, family members, friends, church, compatriots, whoever it might be, we don't owe them a thing.

This is particularly hard when we think about our parents. Sometimes we think, well, you know, I really need to live up to a standard that my parents have expected of me. They've always thought, well, I would be this or I'd be that or the other.

The Bible says we are not debtors to anyone or to anything in this life. We are debtors. And Paul doesn't even finish this comparison.

He leaves it to us to finish. He says, look, we are not debtors to the flesh. But look at the way he phrases this in verse 12.

He says, Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, but not to the flesh to live according to the flesh. If you live according to the flesh, you will die. Well, we're all going to die, aren't we? Whether we live in the flesh or live to the Spirit physically, we're all going to die unless we happen to be in the rapture generation.

What does he mean? Our life will be fruitless. Everything that God has done for us will die on the vine. We will fail the grace of God.

We will fall short of the grace of God. We will fall away from Christ. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

You'll live today. You'll live tomorrow. You'll live the next day.

But he says in verse 12, We are debtors, but we're not debtors to the flesh. So what are we debtors to? We are debtors to God. We are debtors to the grace of God.

We are debtors to the Spirit of God. We owe something. It's more than an opportunity.

It's a duty. It's more than a calling. It is a mandate.

It is a command. That's why the imperatives in Galatians and the imperatives in Romans and elsewhere in the New Testament are there. It doesn't say, Well, if you really want to, here's an opportunity.

If you'd like to max out, here's an opportunity. It's a command. Walk by means of the Spirit.

As you have received Christ Jesus, so walk. It's in the imperative mood. It's a command.

It's not a choice. It's not an option for us, although it is a choice. So we are debtors, and there's more at stake than just our pleasure or our happiness in this life.

So much of Christianity as it is presented today is a feel-good philosophy. It's a feel-good approach. It's a problem-solving device.

If you're having some difficulties, come to Jesus Christ. He'll solve your problems. He'll lift your burdens.

He'll give you peace and He'll give you happiness. It's presented that, Well, I want to solve my problems. I want what's in it for me.

I want peace. I want happiness. Anybody can offer that as the carrot on the stick.

We're reminded of what Jesus said when He was preaching to the crowds, and He said, What man, when he decides that he's going to take a course of action, doesn't sit down and count the cost? And we need to be aware that when we enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ, when we answer the call of God, which is rightful and proper upon us, we are debtors. We have a duty. I think a lot of people who sign up for ROTC scholarships and people who go to be cadets at West Point or midshipmen at the Naval Academy, look at it, and to be fair, I think the candidate guidance office pitches it this way a lot.

Here's what's in it for you. Be all you can be. Join the Army.

Join the Navy and see the world. It's always pitched as, This is what this will do for you. And we don't often hear the old call, This is your responsibility.

You live in a free country, and the reason it's free is that people have served to keep it free, and you need to pitch in and fulfill your obligation as a citizen of this country to be a good citizen, to serve if you're able to serve, and so forth. We don't hear that much anymore. It's all pitched as,

This is what this will do for you.

Join, and you'll get \$30,000 of scholarship money, and you can go to school and fulfill your dreams, and so forth. And the sense of obligation doesn't come to the fore. And this is something we need to be aware of.

Being a believer in Jesus Christ places us under obligation to God. And all mankind is under obligation to God to respond to what Jesus Christ has done, and after we respond, to live and set our minds on the things of the Spirit. So if the good things that come to us from God as a result of this are not enough, we are reminded that it isn't just a matter of deciding, Well, I'm relatively happy with my life the way it is, so I don't need to change.

We have an obligation. All of us as believers have an obligation. Whether we're content with life the way it is or not, we are required, we are duty bound to look and see where we stand and if we're really setting our mind on the things of the Spirit or not.

Our personal happiness with the status quo doesn't enter into it. We are debtors. In verse 14 he says, As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Now, let me ask you this. Do you think that every single believer in Jesus Christ as we speak right now is led by the Spirit of God? I think just from our own observation without even going to the rest of Scripture, we could say that's just not the case. I, myself, am not always led by the Spirit of God.

So does that mean that if at any point we're not being led by the Spirit of God, we're not saved? We're no longer sons of God? We're no longer in union with Christ? If you're in union with Christ, you're a son of God. So if you're not a son of God in that sense, you're not in union with Christ. And so if you're not led by the Spirit of God, you've lost your salvation.

Some people actually take this passage that way. But we are reminded once again of what Jesus said. If you obey, if you operate out of righteousness from the heart, if you live by faith, then you will be sons of your Father in heaven.

And this is sons in the true sense. He's a chip off the old block. He's like His Father.

We reflect the image of God. Did it ever occur to you that I was thinking about this earlier today and I don't know why. I think it's because Geraldo Rivera was on the TV.

But you see all of these people come on the TV set of every conceivable, strange, bizarre stripe. And everybody is looking for something. It seems like everybody in life is born in life and grows up hungry for something different, something better.

You see very few people who say, you know, I'm just fulfilled. I'm happy. I don't need anything.

I have no ambitions. I'm just content. Everything is great.

Especially in the unbelieving world, everyone is seeking something else, something different, something more. And the only place that we really find that is in Christ. And we know that.

But it occurred to me that we were initially created. Adam and Eve were created. And there's a phrase in Genesis that says, in the image of God created He Him.

Male and female created He them. And there's been a lot of discussion and study and meditation done on what does it mean that man was created in the image of God. What is the image of God? It's what He looks like, how He's perceived, what His attributes are, what His characteristics are.

That's the image of anything. And that's how we were created. And yet we fell.

And we fell away from reflecting everything that God is, righteousness and justice and love and so forth. And we're going to be unhappy because the purpose for which we were created, which is to be in the image of God, has been messed up by the fall and by the corruption that's a part of our nature. And the only time that we really achieve that sense of fulfillment and peace that God designed for us is when we're back to fulfilling the purpose for which we were created, which is the image of God.

And Jesus Christ is the fullness of the deity in bodily form. And so when we are in Him and when He is in us, what happens? The essence of what we were created to be is fulfilled. We are in the image of God again.

And it goes back to the most fundamental, basic, first purpose and first cause for which we were created. And nothing else will fill that void. Not marriage, not success, not fame, anything else that we could think of in life can never fill the void left by the absence of the image of God.

What could you possibly shovel into a hole that is the size of the image of God? Nothing except the image of God will fill that void that's in every human soul. And we are never truly happy and we're never truly at peace until that void of the image of God in our soul is filled with the image of God. It's filled with Jesus Christ when we are in Christ.

And we may think that certain things make us happy or will make us happy. We pursue a lot of things in this life when we set our minds on the things of the flesh. But we are ultimately, always, doomed to disappointment because there's nothing as big or as full or as complete as the image of God.

And that's what Paul is talking about in Romans chapter 8. When we are in Christ, when we set our minds on the things of the Spirit, when God the Holy Spirit is using the Word of God in our soul, that first purpose is fulfilled and that's where we are. If you, by the Spirit, put to death the

deeds of the body, you will live. That is true life.

That's life in the sense that Adam and Eve had it in the garden before the fall. It's genuine, great human life that partakes of the eternal. Well, let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we will continue here in verses 14 and following and once again see what it means to be a child of God. Let's pause here and take our break.